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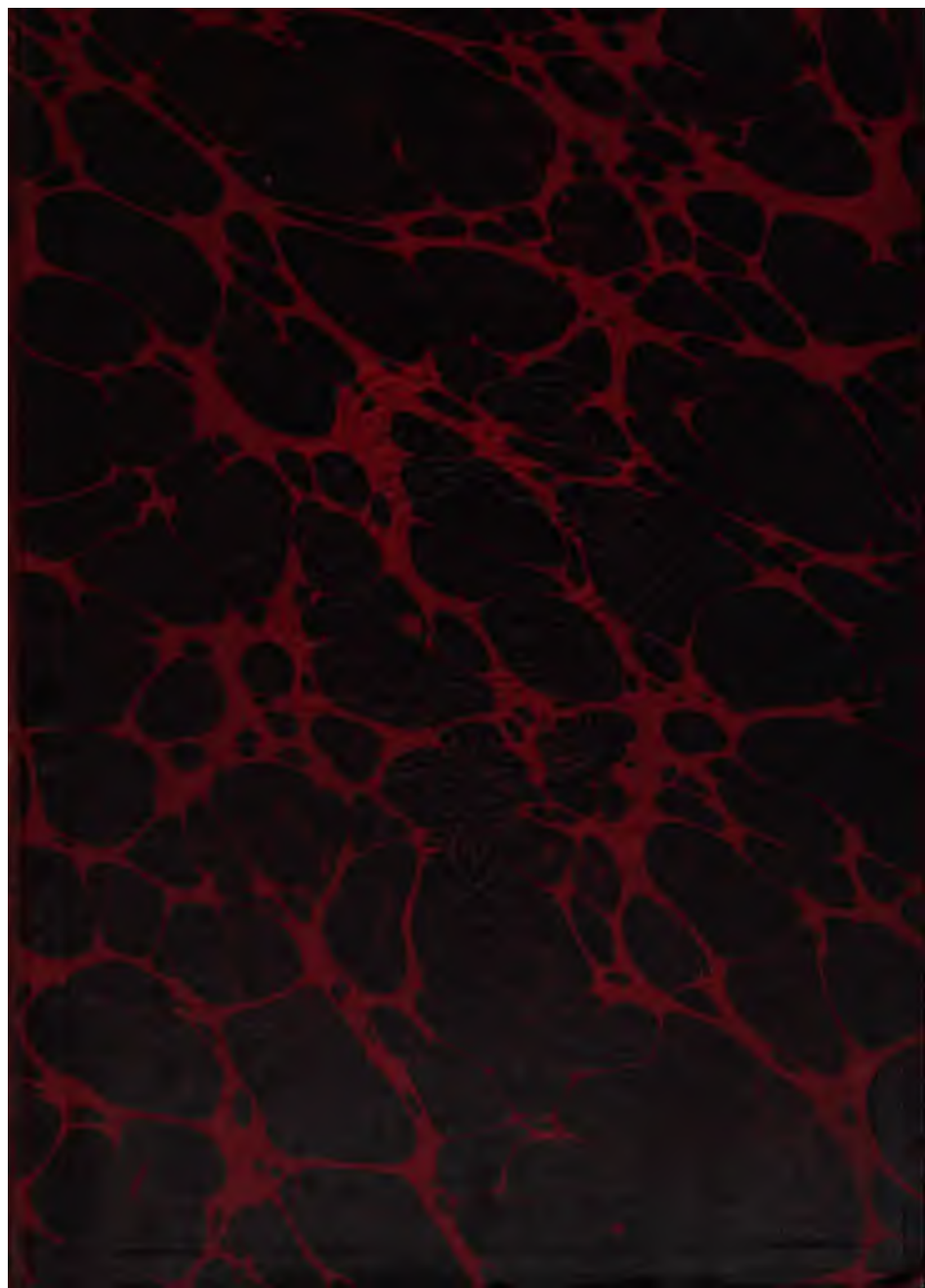
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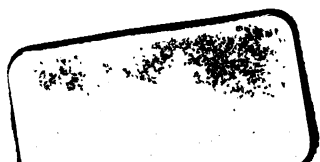
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SCENES AND ADVENTURES

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SCENES AND ADVENTURES

IN

CENTRAL AMERICA

EDITED BY

FREDERICK HARDMAN, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "PENINSULAR SCENES AND SKETCHES,"
"THE STUDENT OF SALAMANCA," ETC.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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PREFACE.

THE following "Scenes and Adventures" are based upon the German works of Charles Sealsfield, a writer far less known in this country than his genius entitles him to be. I have here condensed and thrown together some of their most striking and interesting passages; using much compression, aiming at rendering the spirit rather than the letter, occasionally—when for connexion's sake, or other reasons, it appeared advisable—introducing original passages. I venture to believe my *rifacimenti* better adapted to English tastes than would be a complete and literal translation of any one of Mr Sealsfield's numerous works.

Those persons whom the perusal of this volume may render curious to know more of a German-American writer whose name was long a mystery in Germany, are referred to my articles in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, No. CCCLII., and in No. LXXIV. of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*.

FREDERICK HARDMAN.

LONDON, *February* 1852.

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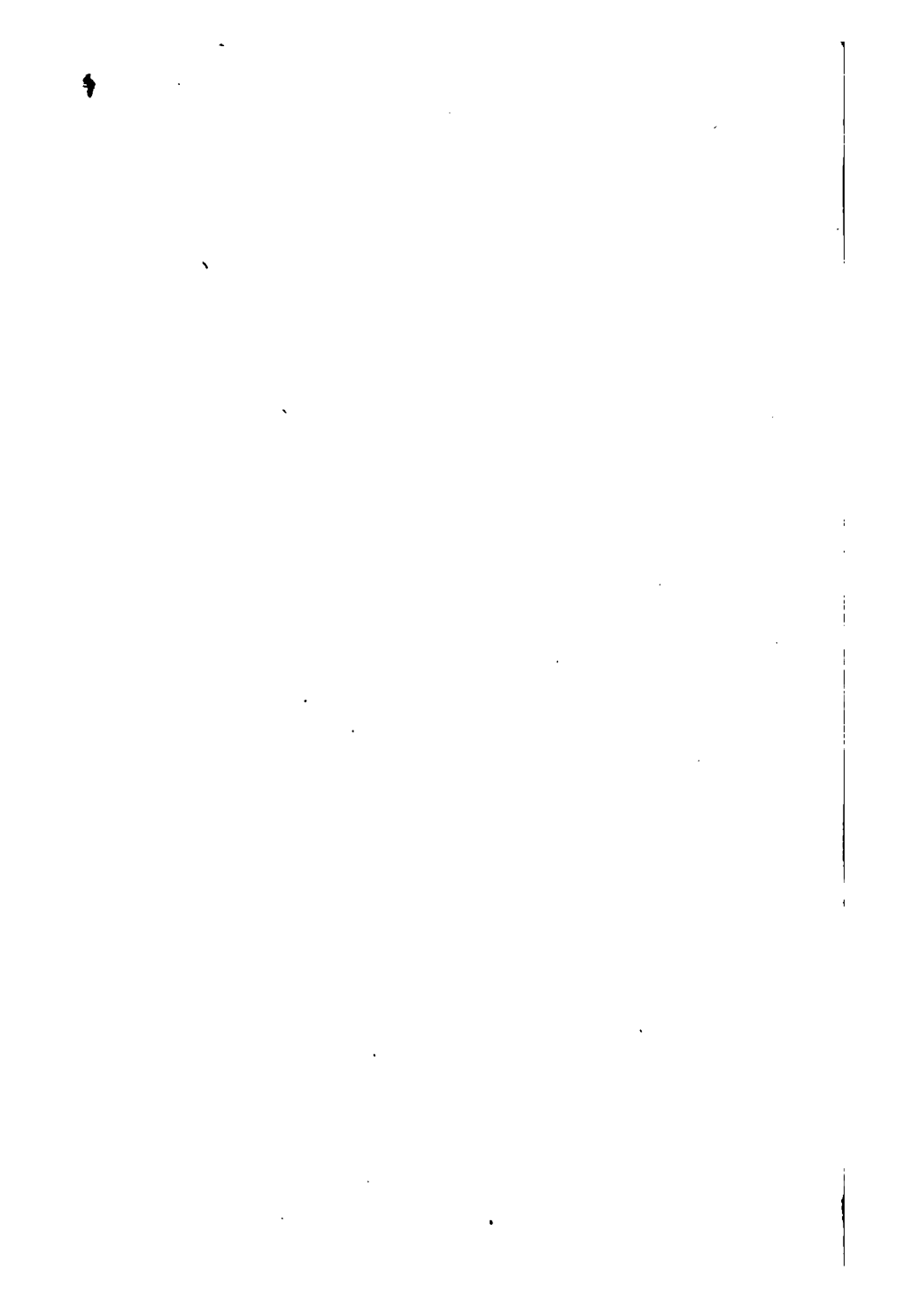
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ADVENTURES IN LOUISIANA



ADVENTURES IN LOUISIANA.

CHAPTER I.

THE CYPRESS SWAMP.

IT was a sultry September afternoon in the year 18—. My friend Carleton and myself had been for three days wandering in the prairies, and had nearly filled our tin boxes and other receptacles with specimens of rare and curious plants. The penalty of our zeal as naturalists had been a complete roasting from the sun, which had shot down its rays during the whole time of our ramble, with an ardour only to be appreciated by those who have visited the prairies of Louisiana. What made matters worse, our little store of wine had been early expended ; some taffia, with which we had replenished our flasks, had also disappeared ; and the scanty supplies of water we had been able to discover contained so much vegetable and animal matter, as to be undrinkable, unless in some

way qualified. In this dilemma, we came to a halt under a clump of hickory trees, and despatched Martin, Carleton's Acadian servant, upon a voyage of discovery. He had assured us that we must ere long fall in with some party of Americans—or Cochon Yankees, as he called them—who, in spite of the hatred borne them by the Acadians and Creoles, were daily becoming more numerous in the country.

After waiting, in anxious expectation of Martin's return, for a full hour, during which the air seemed to grow more and more sultry, my companion waxed impatient.

"What can the fellow be about?" cried he. "Give a blast on the horn," he added, handing me the instrument; "I cannot sound it myself, for my tongue cleaves to my palate from heat and drought."

I put the horn to my mouth, and gave a blast; but the tones emitted were not the clear echo-awakening sounds that cheer and strengthen the hunter; they were dull and short, as though the air had lost all elasticity and vibration, and by its weight crushed back the sounds into the horn. It was a warning of some inscrutable danger. We gazed around us, and saw that others were not wanting.

The spot where we had halted was on the edge of one of those pine forests that extend, almost without interruption, from the hills of the Côte

Gelée to the Opelousa mountains, and of a vast prairie, sprinkled here and there with palmetto fields, clumps of trees, and broad patches of brushwood, which appeared mere dark specks on the immense extent of plain that lay before us, covered with grass of the brightest green, and so long as to reach up to our horses' shoulders. To the right was a plantation of palmettos, half a mile wide, bounded by a sort of creek or gully, whose banks were covered with gigantic cypress trees. Beyond this, more prairie and a wood of evergreen oak. To the east, an impenetrable thicket of magnolias, papaws, oak and bean trees—to the north, the pine wood before mentioned.

Such was the rich landscape we had been surrounded by, one short hour before. But now, on looking around, we found the scene changed. Our horizon was circumscribed by rising clouds of bluish grey vapour, which approached us rapidly from the wind quarter. Each moment this fog thickened; the sun no longer dazzled our eyes when we gazed on it, but showed through the mist like a pale red moon; the outlines of the forest disappeared, veiled from our sight by masses of vapour; and the air, which, during the morning, had been light and elastic, although hot, became heavier and more difficult to inhale. The part of the prairie that was still visible, had the appearance of a narrow, misty valley, enclosed between two mighty ranges of grey mountains, which the

fog represented. As we gazed around us and beheld these strange phenomena, our eyes met, and we read in each other's countenance that embarrassment which the bravest and most light-hearted are apt to feel when hemmed in by perils of which they cannot conjecture the nature.

"Fire off your gun," said I to Carleton. I started at the alteration in my own voice. The gun went off, but the report seemed stifled by the compressed atmosphere. It did not even alarm some water-fowl that were plashing and floundering in the creek a few hundred paces from us.

"Look at our horses!" exclaimed Carleton. "They are surely going mad." The animals were evidently uneasy. They pricked up their ears, turned half round, and gazed with startled eyes behind them; then strained their heads and necks in the opposite direction to the vapour, snorting violently, and at last tried to break away from the trees to which they were tethered. A short time previously they had appeared much fatigued, but now they were all fire and impatience.

"It is impossible to remain here," said Carleton.

"But whither shall we go?"

"Whithersoever our horses choose to take us."

We untied the animals and sprang upon them. Scarcely were we in the saddle, when they started off at a pace as frantic as if a pack of wolves had been at their heels; and, taking the direction of the creek, which ran between the palmetto planta-

tion and a cypress wood, they continued along its banks at the same wild gallop. As we advanced, the creek widened ; in place of palmettos, clumps of marsh reeds and rushes showed themselves here and there. An unearthly stillness prevailed, only broken now and then by the cry of a wild-goose ; and even that had something strange and unnatural in its sound.

"What can be the meaning of this?" cried Carleton. "I burn with heat, and yet have not the slightest moisture on my skin. These signs are incomprehensible. For God's sake, sound the horn again."

I did so, but this time the sound seemed forced back through the horn, and died away upon my lips. The air was so hot and parching, that our horses' coats, which, a short time previously, had been dripping with sweat, were now perfectly dry, and the hair plastered together as with lime ; the animals' tongues hung out of their mouths, and they panted for cooler air.

"Look yonder!" cried Carleton, and he pointed to the line of the horizon, which had hitherto been of grey, lead-coloured vapour. It was now reddish in the south-west quarter, and the vapour had taken the appearance of smoke. At the same time we heard a distant crackling, like a heavy running-fire of musketry, repeated at short intervals. Each time it was heard, our horses were scared and trembled.

The creek grew rapidly wider, and the ground was so swampy, that we could proceed no farther. Seeing this, we agreed to return to the prairie, and to try if it were not cooler among the palmettos. But when we came to the place where we had crossed the creek, our horses refused to take the leap again, and it was with the greatest difficulty we at length forced them over. All this time the redness in the horizon was getting brighter, and the atmosphere hotter and drier; the smoke had spread itself over prairie, forest, and plantations. We continued retracing our steps as well as we could to the spot where we had halted. "See there," said Carleton; "not half an hour ago those reeds were as fresh and green as if they had just sprung out of the earth, and now look at them—the leaves hang down parched and curled by the heat."

The whole prairie, the whole horizon to the south-west, was one mass of dense smoke, through which the sun's disk looked scarcely brighter than a paper-lantern. Behind the thick curtain which thus concealed everything from our view, we heard a loud hissing, like that of a multitude of snakes. The smoke was stifling and unbearable; our horses again turned panting round, and tore madly towards the creek. On reaching it we dismounted, but had the greatest difficulty to prevent them from leaping into the water. The streaks of red to our right became brighter and brighter, and

gleamed through the huge, dark trunks of the cypress trees ; the crackling and hissing were louder than ever. Suddenly the frightful truth flashed upon us.

"THE PRAIRIE IS ON FIRE!" exclaimed Carleton and I, in a breath.

As we uttered the words, there was a loud rustling behind us, and a herd of deer broke headlong through a thicket of tall reeds and bulrushes, and dashed up to their necks into the water. There they remained, not fifty paces from us, little more than their heads above the surface, gazing at us, as though imploring our help and compassion. We fancied we could see tears in the poor beasts' eyes.

We looked behind us. On came the pillars of flame, flickering and threatening through the smoke, licking up all before them ; and preceded by gusts of a wind so hot and blasting that it seemed to dry the very marrow in our bones. The roaring of the fire was now distinctly audible, mingled with hissing, whistling sounds, and cracking reports, as of mighty trees falling. Suddenly a bright flame shot up through the stifling smoke, and immediately afterwards a sea of fire burst upon our aching eyeballs. The whole palmetto field was in flames.

The heat was so great, that we every moment expected to see our clothes take fire. Our horses dragged us still nearer to the creek, sprang into the water, and drew us down the bank after them.

Another rustling and noise in the thicket of reeds. A she-bear, with her cubs at her heels, came towards us ; and at the same time a second herd of deer rushed into the water, not twenty yards from where we were standing. We pointed our guns at the bears ; they moved off towards the deer, who remained undisturbed at their approach ; and there they stood, bears and deer, not five paces apart, but taking no more notice of each other than if they had been animals of the same species. More beasts now flocked to the river. Deer, wolves, foxes, horses—all came in crowds to seek shelter in one element from the fury of another. Most of them, however, went farther up the creek, where it took a north-easterly direction, and widened into a sort of lake. Those that had first arrived followed the new-comers, and we did the same.

All of a sudden we heard the baying of hounds. "Hurra ! there are dogs ; men must be near." A volley from a dozen rifles was the answer to our exclamation. The shots were fired not two hundred yards from us, yet we saw nothing of those who fired them. The wild beasts around us trembled and crouched before this new danger, but did not move a step. We ourselves were standing in the midst of them up to our waists in water. "Who goes there ?" we shouted. Another volley, and this time not a hundred yards off. We saw the flashes of the pieces, and heard voices talking in a

dialect compounded of French and Indian. We perceived that we had to do with Acadians. A third volley, and the bullets whistled about our ears. It was getting past a joke. "Halt!" shouted we; "stop firing till you see what you are firing at." There was a dead silence for a moment, then a burst of savage laughter. "Fire! fire!" cried two or three voices.

"If you fire," cried I, "look out for yourselves, for we shall do the same. Have a care what you do."

"Morbleu! Sacre!" roared half a score of voices. "Who is that who dares give us orders? Fire on the dogs!"

"If you do, we return it."

"*Sacre!*" screamed the savages. "They are gentlemen from the towns. Their speech betrays them. Shoot them—the dogs, the spies! What do they want in the prairie!"

"Your blood be on your own heads!" cried I. And, with the feelings of desperate men, we levelled our guns in the direction in which we had seen the flashes of the last volley. At that moment—"Halt! What is here!" shouted a stentorian voice close to us.

"Cease firing, or you are dead men!" cried five or six other voices.

"*Sacre! ce sont des Americains,*" muttered the Acadians.

"Monsieur Carleton!" cried a voice.

"Here!" replied my friend. A boat shot out of the smoke, between us and our antagonists. Carleton's servant was in it. The next moment we were surrounded by a score of Acadians and half-a-dozen Americans.

It appeared that the Acadians, so soon as they perceived the prairie to be on fire, had got into a boat and descended a creek that flowed into the Chicot creek, on which we now were. The beasts of the forest and prairie, flying to the water, found themselves enclosed in the angle formed by the two creeks, and their retreat being cut off by the fire, they fell an easy prey to the Acadians—wild, half savage fellows, who slaughtered them in a profusion, and with a brutality, that excited our disgust, a feeling which the Americans seemed to share.

"Well, stranger," said one of the latter, an old man, to Carleton, "do you go with them Acadians or come with us?"

"Who are you, my friends?"

"Friends!" repeated the Yankee, shaking his head, "your friendships are soon made. Friends, indeed! We ain't that yet; but if you be minded to come with us, well and good."

"I met these American gentlemen," now put in Martin, "and when they heard that you had lost your way, and were out of provisions, they were so good as to come and seek you."

"You ben't much used to the prairie, I reckon?" observed the American who had spoken before.

"No, indeed, my friend," said I.

"I told you a'ready," replied the man, with some degree of pride, "we ain't your friends; but if you choose to accept American hospitality, you're welcome."

We glanced at the Acadians, who were still firing, and dragging the beasts they slaughtered into their boat and to the shore. They looked like perfect savages, and there was little temptation to seek guidance or assistance at their hands.

"If it is agreeable to you, we will accompany you," said I to the American, making a step towards the boat. We were eager to be off, for the heat and smoke were unbearable. The Yankee answered neither yes nor no. His attention was engrossed by the proceedings of the Acadians.

"They're worse than Injuns," said he to a young man standing by him. "They shoot more in an hour than they could eat in a year, in their tarnation French wastefulness."

"I've a notion o' makin' 'em leave off," replied the young man.

"The country's theirs, or their masters' at least," rejoined the other. "I reckon it's no business of ours."

This dialogue was carried on with the greatest possible degree of drawling deliberation, and under circumstances in which certainly none but a Yankee would have thought of wasting time in words. A prairie twenty miles long and ten broad, and a

couple of miles of palmetto ground, all in a blaze—the flames drawing nearer every minute, and having, in some places, already reached up to the shores of the creek. On the other side a couple of dozen wild Acadians were firing right and left, without paying the least attention where or whom their bullets struck. Carleton and myself were standing up to our waists in water, but still the Americans chatted together as unconcernedly as if they had been seated under the roofs of their own blockhouses.

“Do you live far from here?” said I at last to the Yankee, rather impatiently.

“Not so far as I sometimes wish,” answered he, with a contemptuous glance at the Acadians, “but far enough to get you an appetite for your supper, if you ain’t got one already.” And taking a thin roll of tobacco out of his pocket, he bit off a piece of it, laid his hands upon the muzzle of his rifle, leant his chin upon his hands, and seemed to have forgotten all about us.

To men in our situation, such apathy was intolerable.

“My good man,” said I, “will you put your hospitable offer into execution, and take—”

I could not continue, for I was suffocated with the heat and smoke. The water of the creek was actually getting warm.

“I’ve a notion,” said the Yankee, with his usual drawl, and apparently only just perceiving our dis-

tress, "I've a notion we had better be movin' out o' the way o' the fire. Now, strangers, in with you." And he helped Carleton and myself into the boat, where we lay down, fainting from heat and exhaustion.

When we recovered a little, we found ourselves in the bottom of the boat, and the old Yankee standing by us with a bottle of whisky in his hand, which he invited us to taste. We felt better for the cordial, and able to look around us.

Before us lay an apparently interminable cypress swamp. Behind us was a sheet of water, formed by the junction of the two creeks, and at present overhung by a mass of smoke which concealed the horizon from our view. From time to time there was a burst of flame that lit up the swamp, causing the cypress-trees to look as if they grew out of a sea of fire.

"Come," said the old Yankee, "we must get on. It is near sunset, and we have far to go."

"And which way lies our road?" I asked.

"Across the cypress swamp, unless you'd rather go round it."

"The shortest road is the best," said Carleton.

"The shortest road is the best!" repeated the Yankee contemptuously, and turned to his companions. "Spoken like a Britisher. Well, he shall have his own way, and the more so that I believe it as good a one as the other. James," added he, turning to one of the men, "you go

further down, through Snapping Turtle Swamp; we will cross here."

"And our horses?" said I.

"They are grazing in the rushes. They'll be took care of. We shall have rain to-night, and to-morrow they may come round without singeing a hoof."

I had found myself once or twice upon the borders of the swamp that now lay before us, but had always considered it impenetrable, and I did not understand, as I gazed into its gloomy depths, how we could possibly cross it.

"Is there any beaten path or road through the swamp?" inquired I of the old man.

"Path or road! Do you take it for a gentleman's park? There's the path that natur' has made." And he sprang upon the trunk of a tree covered with moss and creepers, which rose out of the vast depth of mud.

"*Here's* the path," said he.

"Then we will wait and come round with our horses," I replied. "Where shall we find them?"

"As you please, stranger. *We* shall cross the swamp. Only, if you can't do like your horses, and sup off bulrushes, you are likely to fast for the next twenty-four hours."

"And why so? There is game and wild-fowl for the shooting."

"No doubt there is, if you can eat them raw, like the Injuns. Where will you find, within two

miles round, a square foot of dry land to make your fire on?"

To say the truth, we did not altogether like the company we had fallen into. These Yankee squatters bore in general but an indifferent character. They were said to fear neither God nor man, to trust entirely to their axe and their rifle, and to be little scrupulous in questions of property; in short, to be scarce less wild and dangerous than the Indians themselves.

The Yankee who had hitherto acted as spokesman, and who seemed to be in some way or other the chief of the party, was a man apparently near sixty years of age, upwards of six feet high, thin in person, but with bone and muscle indicative of great strength. His features were keen and sharp; his eye like a falcon's; his bearing and manners bespoke an exalted opinion of himself, and (at least as far as we were concerned) a tolerable degree of contempt for others. His dress consisted of a jacket of skins, secured round the waist by a girdle, in which was stuck a long knife; leather breeches, a straw hat without a brim, and moccasins. His companions were similarly accoutred.

"Where is Martin?" cried Carleton.

"Do you mean the Acadian lad who brought us to you?"

"The same."

The Yankee pointed towards the smoke.

"Yonder, no doubt, with his countrymen ; but I reckon their infernal hunt is over. I hear no more shots."

"Then we will go to him. But where are our horses?"

"I've a notion," said one of the younger men, "the stranger don't rightly know what he wants. Your horses are grazing a mile off. You would not have had us make the poor brutes swim through the creek tied to the stern of the boat? 'Lijah is with them."

"And what will he do with them?"

"Joel is going back with the boat, and when the fire is out he will bring them round," said the elder Yankee. "You don't suppose—" added he—He left the sentence unfinished, but a smile of scornful meaning flitted over his features.

I looked at Carleton. He nodded. "We *will* go with you," said I, "and trust entirely to your guidance."

"You do well," was the brief reply. "Joel," added he, turning to one of the young men, "where are the torches? We shall want them."

"Torches!" exclaimed I.

The Yankee gave me a look, as much as to say—You *must* meddle with everything, must you? "Yes," replied he; "and, if you had ten lives, it would be as much as they are all worth to enter this swamp without torches." So saying, he

struck fire, and selecting a couple of pine splinters from several lying in the boat, he lighted them, doing everything with such extraordinary deliberation, and so oddly, that in spite of our unpleasant situation we could scarcely help laughing. Meantime the boat pushed off with two men in it, leaving Carleton, myself, the old man, and another American, standing at the edge of the swamp.

"Follow me, step by step, and as if you were treading on eggs," said our leader; "and you, Jonathan, have an eye to the strangers, and don't wait till they are up to their necks in the mud to pick them out of it."

We did not feel much comforted by this speech; but, mustering all our courage, we strode on after our plain-spoken guide.

We had proceeded but a very short distance into the swamp before we found out the use of the torches. The huge trunks of the cypress-trees, which stood four or five yards asunder, shot up to a height of fifty feet, entirely free from branches, which then, however, spread out at right angles to the stem, making the trees appear like gigantic umbrellas, and covering the whole morass with an impenetrable roof, through which not even a sunbeam could find a passage. On looking behind us, we saw the daylight at the entrance of the swamp, as at the mouth of a vast cavern. The further we went the thicker became the air; and

at last the effluvia was so stifling and pestilential, that the torches burnt pale and dim, and more than once threatened to go out.

"Yes, yes," muttered our guide to himself, "a night passed in this swamp would leave a man ague-struck for the rest of his days. A night—ay, an hour would do it, if your pores were ever so little open; but now there's no danger; the prairie fire's good for that, dries the sweat and closes the pores."

He went on conversing thus with himself, but still striding forward, throwing his torchlight on each log or tree-trunk, and trying its solidity with his foot before he trusted his weight upon it—doing all this with a dexterity and speed that proved his familiarity with these dangerous paths.

"Keep close to me," said he to us, "but make yourselves light—as light, at least, as Britishers *can* make themselves. Hold your breath, and—ha! what is that log? Hollo, Nathan," continued he to himself, "what's come to you, man? Don't you know a sixteen foot alligator from a tree?"

He had stretched out his foot, but fortunately, before setting it down, he poked what he took for a log with the butt of his gun. The supposed block of wood gave way a little, and the old squatter, throwing himself back, was within an ace of pushing me into the swamp.

"Aha, friend!" said he, not in the least discon-

certed, "you thought to sarcumvent honest folk with your devilry and cunnin'."

"What is the matter?" asked I.

"Not much the matter," he replied, drawing his knife from its sheath. "Only an alligator: there it is again."

And in the place of the log, which had disappeared, the jaws of a huge alligator gaped before us. I raised my gun to my shoulder. The Yankee seized my arm.

"Don't fire," whispered he. "Don't fire, so long as you can help it. We ain't alone here. This will do as well," he added, as he stooped down, and drove his long knife into the alligator's eye. The monster gave a frightful howl, and lashed violently with its tail, besprinkling us with the black slimy mud of the swamp.

"Take that!" said the squatter with a grim smile, "and that, and that!" stabbing the brute repeatedly between the neck and the ribs, while it writhed and snapped furiously at him. Then wiping his knife, he stuck it in his belt, and looked keenly and cautiously around him.

"I've a notion there must be a tree trunk hereaway; it ain't the first time I've followed this track. There it is, but a good six foot off" And so saying, he gave a spring, and alighted in safety on the stepping place.

"Have a care, man," cried I. "There is water there. I see it glitter."

"Pooh, water ! What *you* call water is snakes. Come on."

I hesitated, and a shudder came over me. The leap, as regarded distance, was a trifling one, but it was over an almost bottomless chasm, full of the foulest mud, on which the mocassin snakes, the deadliest of American reptiles, were swarming.

"Come on !"

Necessity lent me strength, and, pressing my left foot firmly against the log on which I stood, and which each moment sank with our weight deeper into the soft slimy ground, I sprang across. Carleton followed me.

"Well done !" cried the old man. "Courage, and a couple more such leaps, and we shall be getting over the worst of it."

We pushed on, steadily but slowly, never setting our foot on a log till we had ascertained its solidity with the butts of our guns. The cypress swamp extended four or five miles along the shores of the creek : it was a deep lake of black mud, covered over and disguised by a deceitful bright green veil of creeping plants and mosses, which had spread themselves in their rank luxuriance over its whole surface, and over the branches and trunks of the trees that were scattered about it. These latter were not placed with any very great regularity, but had yet been evidently arranged by the hand of man.

"There seems to have been a sort of path made here," said I to our guide, "for —"

"Silence!" interrupted he, in a low tone; "silence, for your life, till we are on firm ground again. Don't mind the snakes," added he, as the torch-light revealed some enormous ones lying coiled up on the moss and lianas close to us. "Follow me closely."

But at the very moment that I stretched forward my foot, and was about to place it in the print that his had left, the hideous jaw of an alligator was suddenly stretched over the tree-trunk, not twelve inches from my leg, and the creature snapped at me so suddenly, that I had but just time to fire my gun into his glittering lizard-like eye. The monster bounded back, uttered a sound between a bellow and a groan, and, striking wildly about him in the morass, disappeared.

The American looked round when I fired, and an approving smile played about his mouth as he said something to me which I did not hear, owing to the infernal uproar that now arose on all sides of us, and at first completely deafened me.

Thousands, tens of thousands, of birds and reptiles, alligators, enormous bull-frogs, night-owls, ahingas, herons, whose dwellings were in the mud of the swamp, or on its leafy roof, now lifted up their voices, bellowing, hooting, shrieking, and groaning. Issuing from the obscene retreats in which they had hitherto lain hidden, the alligators raised their hideous snouts out of the green coating of the swamp, gnashing their teeth, and

straining towards us, whilst the owls and other birds circled round our heads, flapping and striking us with their wings as they passed. We drew our knives, and endeavoured to defend at least our heads and eyes; but all was in vain against the multitude of enemies that surrounded us; and the unequal combat could not possibly have lasted long, when suddenly a shot was fired, followed immediately by another. The effect they produced was magical. The growls and cries of rage and fury were exchanged for howls of fear and complaint: the alligators withdrew gradually into their native mud; the birds flew in wider circles around us; the unclean multitude were in full retreat. By degrees the various noises died away. But our torches had gone out, and all around us was black as pitch.

"In God's name, are you there, old man," asked I.

"What! still alive?" he replied, with a laugh that jarred unpleasantly upon my nerves, "and the other Britisher too? I told ye we were not alone. These brutes defend themselves if you attack them upon their own ground, and a single shot is sufficient to bring them about one's ears. But when they see you're in earnest, they soon get tired of it, and a couple more shots sent among them generally drive them away again; for they are but senseless squealin' creturs after all."

Whilst he spoke, the old man struck fire, and lit one of the torches.

"Luckily we have rather better footing here," continued he. "And now, forward quickly; for the sun is set, and we have still some way to go."

And again he led the march with a skill and confidence in himself which each moment increased our reliance upon him. After proceeding in this manner for about half an hour, we saw a pale light glimmer in the distance.

"Five minutes more and your troubles are over; but now is the time to be cautious, for it is on the borders of these cursed swamps the alligators best love to lie."

In my eagerness to find myself once more on dry land, I scarcely heard the Yankee's words; and as the stepping places were now near together, I hastened on, and got a little in front of the party. Suddenly I felt a log, on which I had just placed my foot, give way under me. I had scarcely time to call out "Halt!" when I was up to the arm-pits in the swamp, with every prospect of sinking deeper.

"You *will* hurry on," said the old man, with a laugh; and at the same time springing forward, he caught me by the hair. "Take warning for the future," added he, as he helped me out of the mud; "and look there!"

I did look, and saw half a dozen alligators writhing and crawling in the noxious slime within a few yards of us. I felt a sickening sensation, and for a moment I could not utter a word: the Yankee produced his whisky-flask.

"Take a swallow of this," said he; "but no, better wait till we are out of the swamp. Stop a little till your heart beats quieter. So, you are better now. When you've made two or three such journeys with old Nathan, you'll be quite another man. Now—forward again."

A few minutes later we were out of the swamp, and looking over a field of palmettos that waved and rustled in the moonbeams. The air was fresh, and once more we breathed freely.

"Now," said our guide, "a dram, and then in half an hour we are at the Salt Lick."

"Where?" asked I.

"At the Salt Lick, to shoot a deer or two for supper. Hallo! what is that?"

"A thunderclap."

"A thunderclap! You have heard but few of them in Louisiana, I guess, or you would know the difference betwixt thunder and the crack of a backwoodsman's rifle. To be sure, yonder oak wood has an almighty echo. That's James's rifle—he has shot a stag.—There's another shot."

This time it was evidently a rifle-shot, but re-echoed like thunder from the depths of the immense forest.

"We must let them know that we're still in whole skins, and not in the maw of an alligator," said the old man, who had reloaded his rifle, and now fired it off.

In half an hour we were at the Salt Lick, where

we found our guide's two sons busy disembowelling and cutting up a fine buck, an occupation in which they were so engrossed that they hardly noticed our arrival. We sat down, not a little glad to repose after the fatigues and dangers we had gone through. When hind and fore quarters, breast and back, were all divided in right huntsman-like style, the young men looked at their father. "Will you take a bite and a sup here?" said the latter, addressing Carleton and myself, "or will you wait till we get home?"

"How far is there still to go?"

"How far? With a good-trotting horse, and a better road, three quarters of an hour would bring you there. You may reckon it a couple of hours."

"Then we would prefer eating something here."

"As you will."

Without more words, or loss of time, a haunch was cut off one of the hind-quarters; dry leaves and branches were collected; and in one minute a fire blazed brightly, the joint turning before it on a wooden spit. In half an hour the party was collected round a roast haunch of venison, which, although eaten without bread or any of the usual condiments, certainly appeared to us the very best we ever had tasted.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLOODY BLOCKHOUSE

SUPPER over, and clenched by a pull at Nathan's whisky-flask, we prepared for departure. The Americans threw the choicest parts of the buck over their shoulders, the old squatter again took the lead, and we resumed our march, first across a prairie, then through a wood, which was succeeded by a sort of thicket, upon whose branches and thorny shrubs we left numerous fragments of our dress. We had walked several miles almost in silence, when Nathan suddenly came to a halt, and let the but-end of his rifle fall heavily on the ground. I took the opportunity to ask him where we were.

"In Louisiana," replied he, "between the Red River, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mississippi; on French ground, and yet in a country where French power is worth little. Do you see that?" added he suddenly, seizing my arm, and pulling me a few paces aside, whilst he pointed to a dark object which, at that distance and in the moonlight, had

the appearance of an earthen wall. "Do you know what that is?" repeated the squatter.

"An Indian grave, perhaps," replied I.

"A grave it is," was the answer, "but not of the Redskins. As brave a backwoodsman as ever crossed the Mississippi lies buried there. You are not altogether wrong, though. I believe it was once an Indian mound."

We had walked on whilst he spoke, and I now distinguished a hillock or mound of earth, with nearly perpendicular sides, surmounted by a blockhouse, formed of unhewn cypress trunks, of a solidity and thickness upon which four-and-twenty pounders would have had some difficulty in making an impression. Its roof rose about ten feet above a palisade enclosing the building, and consisting of stout saplings sharpened at the top, and stuck in the ground at a very short distance from each other, being moreover strengthened and bound together with wattles and branches. The building had evidently been constructed more as a place of refuge and defence than as an habitual residence.

A ladder was now lowered, by which we ascended to the top of the mound. There was a small door in the palisades, which Nathan opened and passed through, we following.

The blockhouse was of equal length and breadth, about forty feet square. On entering it we found nothing but the bare walls, with the exception of

a wide chimney of sun-baked brick, and in one corner a large wooden slab partly imbedded in the ground.

"Don't tread upon that board," said the old man solemnly, as we approached the slab to examine it, "it is holy ground."

"How holy ground?"

"There lies beneath it as brave a fellow as ever handled axe or rifle. He it was built this blockhouse, and christened it the Bloody Blockhouse—and bloody it proved to be to him. But you shall hear more of it if you like. You shall hear how six American rifles were too many for ninety French and Spanish muskets."

Carleton and I shook our heads incredulously. The Yankee signed to us to follow him, led us out of the blockhouse, and through the stockade to a grassy projection of the hillock.

"Ninety French and Spanish muskets," repeated he in a firm voice, and weighing on each word. "Opposed to them were Asa Nolins, with his three brothers, his brother-in-law, a cousin, and their wives. He fell like a brave American as he was, but not alone, for the dead bodies of thirty foes lay round the blockhouse when he died. They are buried there," added he, pointing to a row of cotton-trees a short distance off, which, in the pale moonlight, might have been taken for the spectres of the departed; "under those cotton-trees they fell, and there they are buried."

The old squatter remained for a short space in his favourite attitude, his hands crossed on his rifle, and his chin resting upon them. He seemed to be summoning up the recollections of a time long gone by. We did not care to interrupt him. The stillness of the night, the light of the moon and stars, that gave the prairie lying before us the appearance of a silvery sea, the sombre forest on either side of the blockhouse, of which the edges only were lighted up by the moonbeams, the vague allusions our guide had made to some fearful scene of strife and slaughter that had been enacted in this now peaceful glade—all these circumstances worked upon our imaginations, and we felt unwilling to break the silence which added to the impressive beauty of the forest scene.

“Did you ever float down the Mississippi?” asked Nathan abruptly. As he spoke he sat down upon the bank, and made sign to us to sit beside him.

“Did you ever float down the Mississippi?”

“No; we came up it from New Orleans hither.”

“That is nothing; the stream is not half so dangerous there as above Natchez. *We came down*, six men, four women, and twice as many children, all the way from the mouths of the Ohio to the Red River; and bad work we had of it, in a crazy old boat, to pass the rapids, and avoid the sandbanks, and snags, and sawyers, and whatever the devil they call them. I calculate

we weren't sorry when we left the river and took to dry land again. The first thing we did was to make a wigwam, Injun fashion, with branches of trees. This was to shelter the women and children. Two men remained to protect them, and the other four divided into two parties, and set off, one south and t'other west, to look for a good place for a settlement. I and Righteous, one of Asa's brothers, took the southerly track.

It was no pleasuring party that journey, but a right-down hard and dangerous expedition, through cypress swamps, where snapping turtles were plenty as mosquitoes, and at every step the congo and mocassin snakes writhed about our ankles. We persevered, however. We had a few handfuls of corn in our hunting-pouches, and our calabashes well filled with whisky. With that and our rifles, we did not want for food.

At length, on the fourth day, we came to an upland, or rolling prairie as we call it, from the top of which we had a view that made our hearts leap for joy. A lovely strip of land lay before us, bounded at the further end by a forest of evergreen oaks, honey locusts, and catalpas. Towards the north was a good ten mile of prairie; on the right hand a wood of cotton-trees, and on the left the forest in which you now are. We decided at once that we should find no better place than this to fix ourselves; and we went back to tell Asa and the others of our discovery, and to show them the way.

to it. Asa and one of his brothers returned with us, bringing part of our traps. They were as pleased with the place as we were, and we went back again to fetch the rest. But it was no easy matter to bring our plunder and the women and children through the forests and swamps. We had to cut paths through the thickets, and to make bridges and rafts to cross the creeks and marshes. After ten days' labour, however, and with the help of our axes, we were at our journey's end.

We began directly clearing and cutting down trees, and in three weeks we had built a loghouse, and were able to lie down to rest without fear of being disturbed by the wolves or catamounts. We built two more houses, so as to have one for each two families, and then set to work to clear the land. We had soon shaped out a couple of fields, a ten-acre one for maize, and another half the size for tobacco. These we began to dig and hoe ; but the ground was hard ; and though we all worked like slaves, we saw there was nothing to be made of it without ploughing. A ploughshare we had, and a plough was easily made—but horses were wanting : so Asa and I took fifty dollars, which was all the money we had amongst us, and set out to explore the country forty miles round, and endeavour to meet with somebody who would sell us a couple of horses and two or three cows. Not a clearing or settlement did we find, and at last we returned discouraged, and again took to digging.

On the very first day after our return, as we were toiling away in the field, a trampling of horses was heard, and four men, mounted, and followed by a couple of wolf-hounds, came cantering over the prairie. It struck us that this would be a famous chance for buying a pair of horses, and Asa went to meet them, to invite them to alight and refresh. At the same time we took our rifles, which were always beside us when we worked in the fields, and advanced towards the strangers. But when they saw our guns, they set spurs to their horses, and rode off to a greater distance. Asa called out to them not to fear, for our rifles were to use against bears, and wolves, and Redskins, and not against Christian men. Upon this, down they came again; we brought out a calabash of real Monongahela, and after they had taken a dram, they got off their horses, and came in and ate some venison, which the women had got ready. They were Creoles, half Spanish, half French, with a streak of the Injun; and they spoke a sort of gibberish not easy to understand. But Asa, who had served in Lafayette's division in the time of the war, knew French well; and when they had eaten and drunk, he tried to make a deal with them for two of their horses.

It was easy to see they were not the sort of men with whom decent folk could trade. First they would, then they wouldn't: which horses did we want, and what would we give. We offered them

thirty-five dollars for their two best horses—and a heavy price it was, for at that time money was scarce in the settlements. They wanted forty, but at last took the thirty-five; and after getting three parts drunk upon taffia, which they asked for to wet the bargain as they said, they mounted two upon each of the remaining horses and rode away.

We now got on famously with our fields, and soon sowed fifteen acres of maize and tobacco, and then began clearing another ten-acre field. We were one day hard at work at this, when one of my boys came running to us, crying out, "Father! father! The Redskins!" We snatched up our rifles, and hastened to the top of the little rising ground on which our houses were built, and thence we saw, not Injuns, but fourteen or fifteen Creoles, galloping towards our clearing, halloing and huzzaing like mad. When they were within fifty yards of us, Asa stepped forward to meet them. As soon as they saw him, one of them called out, "There is the thief! There is the man who stole my brown horse!" Asa made no answer to this, but waited till they came nearer, when one of them rode up to him and asked who was the chief in the settlement. "There is no chief here," answered Asa; "we are all equals and free citizens."

"You have stolen a horse from our friend Monsieur Croupier," replied the other. "You must give it up."

"Is that all?" said Asa, quietly.

"No ; you must show us by what right you hunt on this territory."

"Yes," cried half a dozen others, "we'll have no strangers on our hunting-grounds ; the bears and caguars are getting scarcer than ever ; and as for buffaloes, they are clean exterminated." And all the time they were talking, they kept leaping and galloping about like madmen.

"The sooner the bears and caguars are killed the better," said Asa. "The land is not for dumb brutes, but for men."

The Creoles, however, persisted that we had no right to hunt where we were, and swore we should go away. Then Asa asked them what right they had to send us away. This seemed to embarrass them, and they muttered and talked together ; so that it was easy to see there was no magistrate or person in authority amongst them, but that they were a party of scamps who had come in hopes to frighten us. At last they said they should inform the governor, and the commandant at Natchitoches, and the Lord knows who besides, that we had come and squatted ourselves down here, and built houses, and cleared fields, and all without right or permission ; and that then we might look out. So Asa began to lose patience, and told them they might all go to the devil, and that, if they were not off soon, he should be apt to hasten their movements.

"I must have my horse back !" screamed the Creole whom they called Croupier.

"You shall," replied Asa, "both of them, if you return the five-and-thirty dollars.

"It was only fifteen dollars," cried the lying Creole.

Upon this Asa called to us, and we stepped out from amongst the cotton-trees, behind which we had been standing all the while; and when the Creoles saw us, each with his rifle on his arm, they seemed rather confused, and drew back a little.

"Here are my comrades," said Asa, "who will all bear witness that the horses were sold at the prices of twenty dollars for the one and fifteen for the other. And if any one says the contrary, he says that which is not true."

"*Larifari!*" roared Croupier. "You shan't stop here to call us liars, and spoil our hunting-ground, and build houses on our land. His excellency the governor shall be told of it, and the commandant at Natchitoches, and you shall be driven away." And the other Creoles, who, while Asa was speaking, appeared to be getting more quiet and reasonable, now became madder than ever, and shrieked, and swore, and galloped backwards and forwards, brandishing their fowling-pieces like wild Injuns, and screaming out that we should leave the country, the game wasn't too plenty for them, and such like. At length Asa and the rest of us got angry, and called out to them to take themselves off, or they would be sorry for it; and when they saw us bringing our rifles to our shoul-

ders, they put spurs to their horses, and galloped away to a distance of some five hundred yards. There they halted, and set up such a screeching as almost deafened us, fired off some of their old rusty guns, and then rode away. We all laughed at their bragging and cowardice, except Asa, who looked thoughtful.

"I fear some harm will come of this," said he. "Those fellows will go talking about us in their own country; and if it gets to the ears of the governors or commanding-officers that we have settled down on their territory, they will be sending troops to dislodge us."

Asa's words made us reflect, and we held counsel together as to what was best to be done. I proposed that we should build a blockhouse on the Indian mound to defend ourselves in if we were attacked.

"Yes," said Asa; "but we are only six, and they may send hundreds against us."

"Very true," said I; "but if we had a strong blockhouse on the top of the mound, *that* would be as good as sixty, and we could hold out against a hundred Spanish musketeers. And it's my notion, that if we give up such a handsome bit of ground as we have cleared here without firing a shot, we deserve to have our rifles broken on our own shoulders."

Asa, however, did not seem altogether satisfied. It was easy to see he was thinking of the women and children. Then said Asa's wife, Rachel, "I

calculate," said she, "that Nathan, although he's my brother, and I oughtn't to say it, has spoke like the son of his father, who would have let himself be scalped ten times over before he would have given up such an almighty beautiful piece of land. And what's more, Asa, I for one won't go back up the omnipotent dirty Mississippi; and that's a fact."

"But if a hundred Spanish soldiers come," said Asa, "and I reckon they will come?"

"Build the blockhouse, man, to defend yourselves; and when our people up at Salt River and Cumberland hear that the Spaniards are quarrelling with us, I guess they won't keep their hands crossed before them."

So seeing us all, even the women, thus determined, Asa gave in to our way of thinking, and the very same day we began the blockhouse you see before you. The walls were all of young cypress-trees, and we would fain have roofed it with the same wood; but the smallest of the cypresses were five or six feet thick, and it was no easy matter to split them. So we were obliged to use fir, which, when it is dried by a few days' sun, burns like tinder. But we little thought when we did so, what sorrow those cursed fir planks would bring us.

When all was ready, well and solidly nailed and hammered together, we made a chimney, so that the women might cook if necessary, and then laid

in a good store of hams and dried bears' flesh, filled the meal and whisky tubs, and the water-casks, and brought our plough and what we had most valuable into the blockhouse. We then planted the palisades, securing them strongly in the ground, and to each other, so that it might not be easy to tear them up. We left, as you see, a space of five yards' between the stockade and the house, to have room to move about in. An enemy would have to take the palisades before he could do any injury to the house itself, and we reckoned that, with six good rifles in such hands as ours, it would require a pretty many Spanish musketeers to drive us from our outer defences.

In six weeks all was ready ; all our tools and rations, except what we wanted for daily use, were carried into the fort, and we stood looking at the work of our hands with much satisfaction. Asa was the only one who seemed cast down.

"I've a notion," said he, "this blockhouse will be a bloody one before long ; and what's more, I guess it will be the blood of one of us that'll redden it. I've a sort of feelin' of it, and of who it'll be."

"Pooh, Asa ! what notions be these ! Keep a light heart, man."

And Asa seemed to cheer up again, and to forget his gloomy fancies, and the next day we returned to working in the fields ; but as we were not using the horses, one of us went every morning to patrol

ten or twelve miles backwards and forwards, just for precaution's sake. At night two of us kept watch, relieving one another, and patrolling about the neighbourhood of our clearing.

One morning we were working in the bush and circling trees, when Righteous rode up full gallop.

"They're coming!" cried he; "a hundred of them at least!"

"Are they far off?" said Asa, quite quietly, and as if he had been talking of a herd of deer.

"They are coming over the prairie. In less than half an hour they will be here."

"How are they marching? With van and rear guard? In what order?"

"No order at all, but all of a heap together."

"Good!" said Asa; "they can know little about bush-fighting or soldiering of any kind. Now then, the women into the blockhouse."

Righteous galloped up to our fort, to be there first in case the enemy should find it out. The women soon followed, carrying what they could with them. When we were all in the blockhouse, we pulled up the ladder, made the gate fast, and there we were.

We felt somehow strange when we found ourselves shut up inside the palisades, and only able to look out through the slits we had left for our rifles. We weren't used to be confined in a place, and it made us rightdown wolfish. There we remained, however, as still as mice. Scarce a whis-

per was to be heard. Rachel tore up old shirts and greased them, for wadding for the guns ; we changed our flints, and fixed everything about the rifles properly, whilst the women sharpened our knives and axes all in silence.

Nearly an hour had passed in this way, when we heard a shouting and screaming, and a few musket-shots ; and we saw through our loopholes some Spanish soldiers running backwards and forwards on the crest of the slope on which our houses stood. Suddenly a great pillar of smoke arose, then a second, then a third.

"God be good to us !" cried Rachel, "they are burning our houses." We were all trembling, and quite pale with rage. Harkye, stranger, when men have been slaving and sweating for four or five months to build houses for their wives and for the poor worms of children, and then a parcel of devils from hell come and burn them down like maize-stalks in a stubble-field, it is no wonder that their teeth should grind together, and their fists clench of themselves. So it was with us ; but we said nothing, for our rage would not let us speak. But presently, as we strained our eyes through the loopholes, the Spaniards showed themselves at the opening of the forest yonder, coming towards the blockhouse. We tried to count them, but at first it was impossible, for they came on in a crowd, without any order. They thought lightly enough of those they were seeking, or they would have

been more prudent. However, when they came within five hundred paces, they formed ranks, and we were able to count them. There were eighty-two foot soldiers with muskets and carbines, and three officers on horseback, with drawn swords in their hands. The latter dismounted, and their example was followed by seven other horsemen, amongst whom we recognised three of the rascally Creoles who had brought all this trouble upon us. He they called Croupier was among them. The other four were also Creoles, Acadians, or Canadians. We had seen lots of their sort on the Upper Mississippi, and fine hunters they were, but mostly wild, drunken, debauched barbarians.

The Acadians came on in front, and they set up a whoop when they saw the blockhouse and stockade; but finding we were prepared to receive them, they retreated upon the main body. We saw them speaking to the officers, as if advising them; but the latter shook their heads, and the soldiers continued moving on. They were in uniforms of all colours—blue, white, and brown, but each man dirtier than his neighbour. They marched in good order, nevertheless, the captain and officers coming on in front, and the Acadians keeping on the flanks. The latter, however, edged gradually off towards the cotton-trees, and presently disappeared amongst them.

“Them be the first men to pick off,” said Asa, when he saw this manoeuvre of the Creoles.

"They've steady hands and sharp eyes ; but if once we get rid of them, we need not mind the others."

The Spaniards were now within a hundred yards of us.

"Shall I let fly at the thievin' incendiaries?" said Righteous.

"God forbid!" replied Asa, quite solemn-like. "We will defend ourselves like men ; but let us wait till we are attacked, and may the blood that is shed lie at the door of the aggressors!"

The Spaniards now saw plainly that they would have to take the stockade before they could get at us, and the officers seemed consulting together.

"Halt!" cried Asa, suddenly.

"*Messieurs les Americains*," said the captain, looking up at our loop-holes.

"What's your pleasure?" demanded Asa.

Upon this the captain stuck a dirty pocket-handkerchief upon the point of his sword, and laughing with his officers, moved some twenty paces forward, followed by the troops. Thereupon Asa again shouted to him to halt.

"This is not according to the customs of war," said he. "The flag of truce may advance, but if it is accompanied, we fire."

It was evident that the Spaniards never dreamed of our attempting to resist them ; for there they stood in line before us, and, if we had fired, every shot must have told. The Acadians, who kept themselves all this time snug behind the cotton-

trees, called more than once to the captain to withdraw his men into the wood; but he only shook his head contemptuously. When, however, he heard Asa threaten to fire, he looked puzzled, and as if he thought it just possible we might do as we said. He ordered his men to halt, and called out to us not to fire till he had explained what they came for.

"Then cut it short," cried Asa sternly. "You'd have done better to explain before you burned down our houses, like a pack of Mohawks on the war path."

As he spoke, three bullets whistled from the edge of the forest, and struck the stockades within a few inches of the loophole at which he stood. They were fired by the Creoles, who, although they could not possibly distinguish Asa, had probably seen his rifle barrel glitter through the opening. As soon as they had fired, they sprang behind their trees again, craning their heads forward to hear if there was a groan or a cry. They'd have done better to have kept quiet; for Righteous and I caught a sight of them, and let fly at the same moment. Two of them fell and rolled from behind the trees, and we saw that they were the Creole called Croupier, and another of our horse-dealing friends.

When the Spanish officer heard the shots, he ran back to his men, and shouted out, "Forward! To the assault!" They came on like mad for a

distance of thirty paces, and then, as if they thought we were wild-geese to be frightened by their noise, they fired a volley against the blockhouse.

"Now then!" cried Asa, "are you loaded, Nathan and Righteous? I take the captain—you, Nathan, the lieutenant—Righteous, the third officer—James, the sergeant. Mark your men, and waste no powder."

The Spaniards were still some sixty yards off, but we were sure of our mark at a hundred and sixty, and that if they had been squirrels instead of men. We fired: the captain and lieutenant, the third officer, two sergeants, and another man writhed for an instant upon the grass. The next moment they stretched themselves out—dead.

All was now confusion among the musketeers, who ran in every direction. Most of them took to the wood, but about a dozen remained and lifted up their officers, to see if there was any spark of life left in them.

"Load again—quick!" said Asa, in a low voice. We did so, and six more Spaniards tumbled over. Those who still kept their legs now ran off as if the soles of their shoes had been of red-hot iron.

We set to work to pick out our touchholes and clean our rifles, knowing that we might not have time later, and that a single miss-fire might cost us all our lives. We then loaded, and began calculating what the Spaniards would do next. It is true they had lost their officers; but there were

five Acadians with them, and those were the men we had most reason to fear. Meantime the vultures and turkey-buzzards had already begun to assemble, and presently hundreds of them were circling and hovering over the carcasses, which they as yet feared to touch.

Just then Righteous, who had the sharpest eye of us all, pointed to the corner of the wood, yonder where it joins the brushwood thicket. I made a sign to Asa, and we all looked, and saw there was something creeping and moving through the under-wood. Presently we distinguished two Acadians heading a score of Spaniards, and endeavouring, under cover of the bushes, to steal across the open ground to the east side of the forest.

"The Acadians for you, Nathan and Righteous—the Spaniards for us," said Asa. The next moment two Acadians and four Spaniards lay bleeding in the brushwood. But the bullets were scarce out of our rifles when a third Acadian, whom we had not seen, started up. "Now's the time," shouted he, "before they have loaded again. Follow me!—we will have their blockhouse yet." And he sprang across, followed by the Spaniards. We gnashed our teeth with rage at not having seen the Acadian.

There were still three of these fellows alive, who had now taken command of the Spaniards. Although we had killed or disabled a score of our enemies, those who remained were more than ten

to one of us ; and we were even worse off than at first, for then they were all together, and now we had them on each side of us. But we did not let ourselves be discouraged, although we could not help feeling that the odds against us were fearfully great.

We now had to keep a sharp look-out ; for if one of us showed himself at a loophole, a dozen bullets rattled about his ears. There were many shot-holes through the palisades, which were covered with white streaks where the splinters had been torn off by the lead. The musketeers had spread themselves all along the edge of the forest, and had learned by experience to keep close to their cover. We now and then got a shot at them, and four or five more were killed ; but it was slow work, and the time seemed very long.

Suddenly the Spaniards set up a loud shout. At first we could not make out what was the matter, but presently we heard a hissing and crackling on the roof of the blockhouse. They had wrapped tow round their cartridges, and one of the shots had set light to the fir-boards. Just as we found it out, they gave three more hurras, and we saw the dry planks begin to flame, and the fire to spread.

"We must put that out and at once," said Asa, "if we don't wish to be roasted alive. Some one must get up the chimney with a bucket of water. I'll go myself."

"Let me go, Asa," said Righteous.

"You stop here. It don't matter who goes. The thing will be done in a minute."

He put a chair on a table and got upon it, and then seizing a bar which was fixed across the chimney to hang hams upon, he drew himself up by his arms, and Rachel handed him a pail of water. All this time the flame was burning brighter, and the Spaniards getting louder in their rejoicings and hurraas. Asa stood upon the bar, and, raising the pail above his head, poured the water out of the chimney upon the roof."

"More to the left, Asa," said Righteous; "the fire is strongest more to the left."

"Tarnation seize it!" cried Asa, "I can't see. Hand me up another pailful."

We did so; and when he had got it, he put his head out at the top of the chimney to see where the fire was, and threw the water over the exact spot. But at the very moment that he did so the report of a dozen muskets was heard.

"Ha!" cried Asa in an altered voice, "I have it." And the hams and bucket came tumbling down the chimney, and Asa after them all covered with blood.

"In God's name, man, are you hurt?" cried Rachel.

"Hush, wife!" replied Asa; "keep quiet. I have enough for the rest of my life, which won't be long: but never mind, lads; defend yourselves

well, and don't fire two at the same man. Save your lead, for you will want it all. Promise me that."

"Asa! my beloved Asa!" shrieked Rachel; "if you die, I shall die too."

"Silence! foolish woman; and think of our child, and the one yet unborn! Hark! I hear the Spaniards! Defend yourselves; and, Nathan, be a father to my children."

I had barely time to press his hand and promise. The Spaniards, who had guessed our loss, rushed like mad wolves up to the mound, twenty on one side, and thirty or more on the other.

"Steady!" cried I. "Righteous, here with me; and you, Rachel, show yourself worthy to be Hiram Strong's daughter, and Asa's wife: load this rifle for me whilst I fire my own."

"O God! O God!" cried Rachel, "the hell-hounds have murdered my Asa!"

She clasped her husband's body in her arms, and there was no getting her away. I felt sad enough myself, but there was scanty time for grieving; for a party of Spaniards, headed by one of the Acadians, was close up to the mound on the side which I was defending. I shot the Acadian; but another, the sixth, and last but one, took his place. "Rachel!" cried I, "the rifle, for God's sake, the rifle! a single bullet may save all our lives."

But no Rachel came, and the Acadian and

Spaniards, who, from the cessation of our fire, guessed that we were either unloaded, or had expended our ammunition, now sprang forward, and by climbing, and scrambling, and getting on one another's shoulders, managed to scale the side of the mound, almost perpendicular as you see it is. And in a minute the Acadian and half a dozen Spaniards, with axes, were chopping away at the palisades, and severing the wattles which bound them together. To give the devil his due, if there had been only three like that Acadian, it would have been all up with us. He handled his axe like a real backwoodsman; but the Spaniards wanted either the skill or the strength of arm, and made little impression. There were only Righteous and myself to oppose them; for a dozen more soldiers, with the seventh of those cursed Acadians, were attacking the other side of the stockade.

Righteous shot down one of the Spaniards; but just as he had done so, the Acadian tore up a palisade by the roots, (how he did it I know not to this hour,) held it with the wattles and branches hanging round it like a shield before him, guarding off a blow I aimed at him, then hurled it against me with such force that I staggered backwards, and he sprang past me. I thought it was all over with us. It is true that Righteous, with the butt of his rifle, split the skull of the first Spaniard who entered, and drove his hunting-knife into the

next ; but the Acadian alone was man enough to give us abundant occupation, now he had got in our rear. Just then there was a crack of a rifle, the Acadian gave a leap into the air and fell dead, and at the same moment my son Godsend, a boy ten years old, sprang forward, in his hand Asa's rifle, still smoking from muzzle and touchhole. The glorious boy had loaded the piece when he saw that Rachel did not do it, and in the very nick of time had shot the Acadian through the heart. This brought me to myself again, and with axe in one hand and knife in the other, I rushed in among the Spaniards, hacking and hewing right and left. It was a real butchery, which lasted a good quarter of an hour, as it seemed to me, but certainly some minutes ; until at last the Spaniards got sick of it, and would have done so sooner had they known that their leader was shot. They jumped off the mound and ran away, such of them as were able. Righteous and I put the palisade in its place again, securing it as well as we could, and then, telling my boy to keep watch, ran over to the other side, where a desperate fight was going on.

Three of our party, assisted by the women, were defending the stockade against a score of Spaniards, who kept poking their bayonets between the palisades, till all our people were wounded and bleeding. But Rachel had now recovered from her first grief at her husband's

death, or rather it had turned to rage and revenge, and there she was, like a furious tigress, seizing the bayonets as they were thrust through the stockade, and wrenching them off the muskets, and sometimes pulling the muskets themselves out of the soldiers' hands. But all this struggling had loosened the palisades, and there were one or two openings in them through which the thin-bodied Spaniards, pushed on by their comrades, were able to pass. Just as we came up, two of these copper-coloured Dons had squeezed themselves through, without their muskets, but with their short sabres in their hands. They are active dangerous fellows, those Spaniards, in a hand-to-hand tussle. One of them sprang at me, and if it had not been for my hunting-knife, I was done for, for I had no room to swing my axe; but as he came on I hit him a blow with my fist, which knocked him down, and then ran my knife into him, and jumping over his body snatched a musket out of Rachel's hand, and began laying about me with the but-end of it. I was sorry not to have my rifle, which was handier than those heavy Spanish muskets. The women were now in the way—we hadn't room for so many—so I called out to them to get into the blockhouse and load the rifles. There was still another Acadian alive, and I knew that the fight wouldn't end till he was done for. But whilst we were fighting, Godsend and the women

loaded the rifles and brought them out, and firing through the stockade, killed three or four, and, as luck would have it, the Acadian was one of the number. So when the Spaniards, who are just like hounds, and only come on if led and encouraged, saw that their leader had fallen, they sprang off the mound, with a '*Carajo ! Malditos !*' and ran away as if a shell had burst amongst them."

The old squatter paused, and drew a deep breath. He had forgotten his usual drawl and deliberation, and had become animated and eager whilst describing the stirring incidents in which he had borne so active a part. When he had taken breath, he continued.

"I couldn't say how long the fight lasted ; it seemed short, we were so busy, and yet long, deadly long. It is no joke to have to defend one's life, and the lives of those one loves best, against fourscore bloodthirsty Spaniards, and that with only half a dozen rifles for arms, and a few palisades for shelter. When it was over we were so dog-tired that we fell down where we were, like overdriven oxen, and without minding the blood which lay like water on the ground. Seven Spaniards and two Acadians lay dead within the stockade. We ourselves were all wounded and hacked about, some with knife-stabs and sabrecuts, others with musket-shots ; ugly wounds enough, some of them, but none mortal. If the

Spaniards had returned to the attack, they would have made short work of us; for as soon as we left off fighting, and our blood cooled, we became stiff and helpless. But now came the women with rags and bandages, and washed our wounds and bound them up, and we dragged ourselves into the blockhouse, and lay down upon our mattresses of dry leaves. And Godsend loaded the rifles and a dozen Spanish muskets that were lying about, to be in readiness for another attack, and the women kept watch whilst we slept. But the Spaniards had had enough, and we saw no more of them. Only the next morning, when Jonas went down the ladder to reconnoitre, he found thirty dead and dying, and a few wounded, who begged hard for a drink of water, for that their comrades had deserted them. We got them up into the blockhouse, and had their wounds dressed, and after a time they were cured and left us."

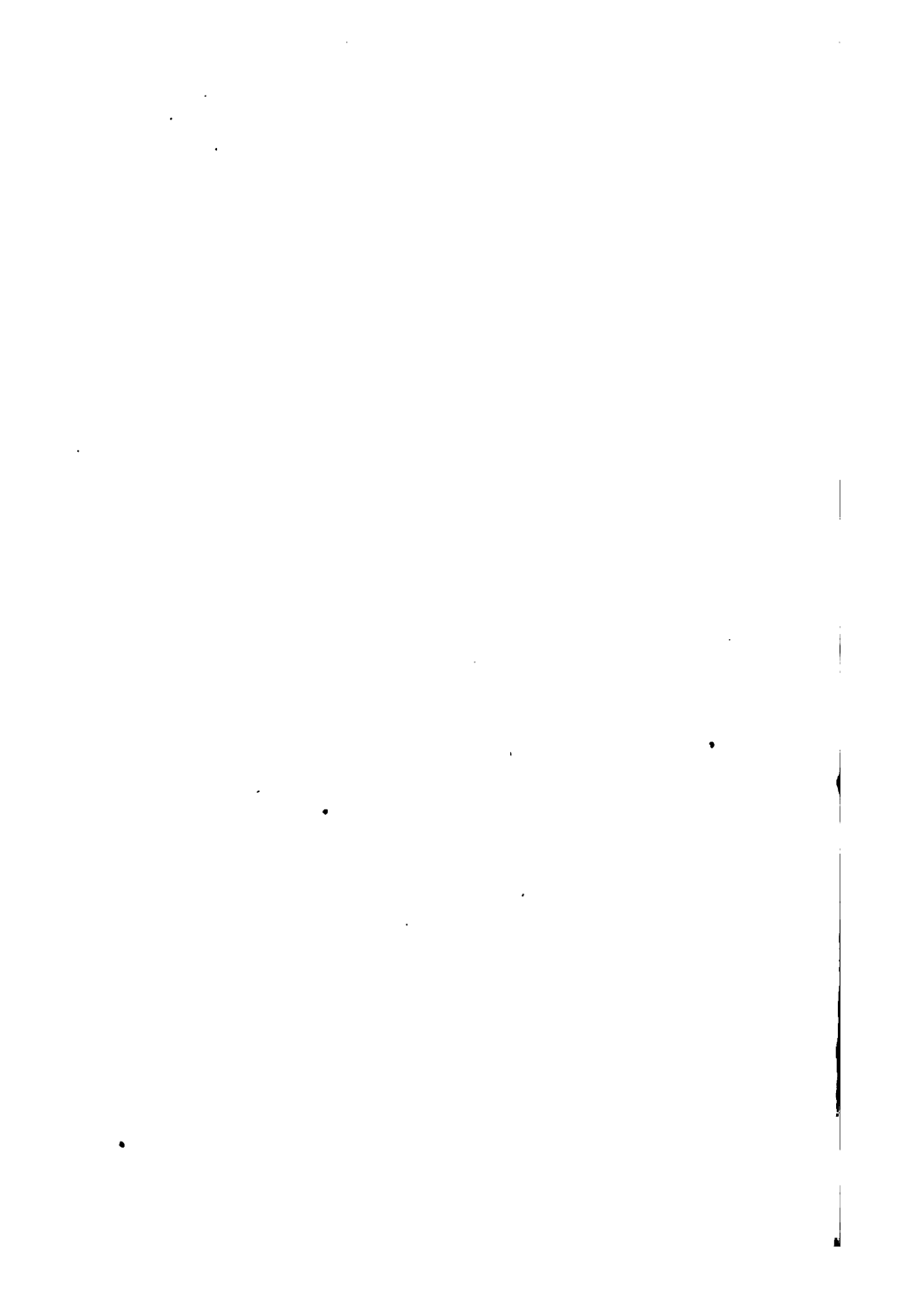
"And were you never attacked again?" said I. "I wonder at your courage in remaining here when aware of the dangers you were exposed to."

"We reckoned we had more right than ever to the land after all the blood it had cost us, and then the news of the fight had got carried into the settlements, and up as far as Salt River; and some of our friends and kinsfolk came down to join us, and there were soon enough of us not to care for twice as many Spaniards as we had beaten off before."

Whilst speaking, the old squatter descended the ladder, and led us out of the forest and over the ridge of a low hill, on the side of which stood a dozen loghouses, casting their black shadows on the moonlit slope. We met with a rough but kind welcome—few words, but plenty of good cheer—and we made acquaintance with the heroes and heroines of the blockhouse siege, and with their sons and daughters, all buxom strapping damsels, and fine manly lads. I have often enjoyed a softer bed, but never a sounder sleep than that night.

The next day our horses were brought round from the swamp, and we took our departure ; but as hardships, however painful to endure, are pleasant to look back upon, so have I often thought with pleasure of our adventures in the prairies, and recurred with the strongest interest to old Nathan's thrilling narrative of the Bloody Blockhouse.

ADVENTURES IN TEXAS



ADVENTURES IN TEXAS.

CHAPTER I.

A SCAMPER IN THE PRAIRIE.

"WHAT took you to Texas?" is a question that has so frequently been asked me by friends in the States, that a reply to it is perhaps the most appropriate commencement I can make to a sketch of my adventures in that country. Many of my fellow-citizens have expressed their surprise—more flattering to me and my family than to Texas—that a son of Judge Morse of Maryland, instead of pitching his tent in his native State, should have deserted it for a land which certainly, at the time I first went to it, was in anything but good repute, and of whose population the Anglo-Saxon portion mainly consisted of outlaws and bad characters, expelled or fugitive from the Union. The facts of the case were these:—I went to Texas, endorsed, as I may say, by a

company of our enlightened New York Yankees, whose speculative attention was just then particularly directed to that country. In other words, I had the good or ill luck, as you may choose to think it, to be the possessor of a Texas-Land-Scrip—that is to say, a certificate issued by the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, declaring and making known to all whom it might concern, that Mr Edward Morse had paid into the hands of the cashier of the said company the sum of one thousand dollars, in consideration of which, he, the said Edward Morse, was duly entitled and authorised to select, within the district and territory of the aforesaid Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, a tract of land of the extent of ten thousand acres, neither more nor less, to take possession of and settle upon it, and, in a word, to exercise over it all the rights of a proprietor; under the sole condition that in the selection of his ten thousand acres he should not infringe on the property or rights of the holders of previously given certificates.

Ten thousand acres of the finest land in the world, and under a heaven compared to which, our Maryland sky, bright as it is, appears dull and foggy! It was certainly a tempting bait; too tempting by far not to be caught at by many in those times of speculation; and accordingly, our free and enlightened citizens bought and sold their millions of Texan acres just as readily as

they did their thousands of towns and villages in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, and their tens of thousands of shares in banks and railways. It was a speculative fever, which has since, we may hope, been in some degree cured. At any rate, the remedies applied have been tolerably severe.

I had not escaped the contagion, and, having got the land on paper, I thought I should like to see it in dirty acres. My intention was to select my plot of ground and take possession of it, and then, if I did not like the country, to turn it into dollars again. If, upon the other hand, the country pleased me, I would return to Maryland, get together what was needful for the undertaking, and set up my roof-tree in Texas for good and all. Accordingly, in company with a friend who had a similar venture, I embarked at Baltimore on board the *Catcher* schooner, and, after a three weeks' voyage, arrived in Galveston Bay.

The grassy shores of this bay, into which the river Brazos empties itself, rise so little above the surface of the water, which they strongly resemble in colour, that it would be difficult to discover them, were it not for three stunted trees growing on the western extremity of a long lizard-shaped island that stretches nearly sixty miles across the bay, and conceals the mouth of the river. These trees are the only landmark for the mariner; and, with their exception, not a single object—not a

hill, a house, nor so much as a bush, relieves the level sameness of the island and adjacent continent.

After we had, with some difficulty, got on the inner side of the island, a pilot came on board and took charge of the vessel. The first thing he did was to run us on a sandbank, off which we got with no small labour, and by the united exertions of sailors and passengers, and at length entered the river. In our impatience to land, I and my friend left the schooner in a cockleshell of a boat, which upset in the surge, and we found ourselves floundering in the water. Luckily it was not very deep, and we escaped with a thorough drenching.

When we had scrambled on shore, we gazed about us for some time before we could persuade ourselves that we were actually upon land, so unnatural was its aspect. It was, without exception, the strangest coast we had ever seen, and there was scarcely a possibility of distinguishing the boundary between earth and water. The green grass grew down to the edge of the green sea, and there was only the streak of white foam left by the latter upon the former to serve as a line of demarcation. Before us was a perfectly level plain, a hundred or more miles in extent, covered with long fine grass, rolling in waves before each puff of the sea-breeze, with neither tree, nor house, nor hill, to vary the unbroken

monotony of the surface. Ten or twelve miles towards the north and north-west, we distinguished some dark masses, which we afterwards discovered to be groups of trees; but to our eyes they looked exactly like islands in a green sea, and we subsequently learned that such groups, innumerable in Texan prairies, are called islands by the people of the country. A more appropriate name, or one better describing their appearance, could not be given to them.

Proceeding along the shore, we came to a blockhouse situated behind a small tongue of land projecting into the river, and decorated with the flag of the Mexican republic, waving in all its glory from the roof. This building, the only one of which, at that time, Galveston harbour could boast, served, as may be supposed, for a great variety of uses. It was the custom-house and the barracks for the garrison, (consisting of a company of Mexican infantry,) the residence of the controller of customs, and of the civil and military intendant, the headquarters of the officer commanding, and it served, moreover, as hotel, and wine and spirit store. Alongside the board, on which was depicted a sort of hieroglyphic, intended for the Mexican eagle, hung a rum-bottle doing duty as a sign, and the republican banner threw its protecting shadow over an announcement of — “Brandy, Whisky, and Accommodation for Man and Beast.”

Approaching the house, we saw the whole garrison assembled before the door. It consisted of a dozen dwarfish, spindle-shanked Mexican soldiers, none of them so big or half so strong as American boys of fifteen, and whom I would have backed a single Kentucky woodsman, armed with a riding-whip, to have driven to the four winds of heaven. These heroes all sported tremendous beards, whiskers, and mustaches, and had a habit of knitting their brows, in the endeavour, as we supposed, to look fierce and formidable. They were crowding round a table of rough planks, and playing a game at cards, in which they were so deeply engrossed that they took no notice of our approach. Their officer, however, came out of the house to meet us with a friendly greeting.

Captain Cotton, formerly editor of the *Mexican Gazette*, now civil and military superintendent of Galveston, customs-director, harbour-master, and tavern-keeper, and a Yankee to boot, seemed to trouble his head—to the credit of his good sense be it said—much less about his various dignities and titles (of which he had more than there were soldiers in his garrison) than about his capital French and Spanish wines, which, it is to be presumed, he laid in duty free. As to the soldiers, in all my life I never saw such wretched-looking, shrivelled dwarfs. I could not help fancying them grotesque elves or goblins, transported thither by some old sorcerer's power. We were never tired

of staring at them and at the country, which also had something supernatural in its aspect. It was like an everlasting billiard-table, without an end. It is a strange feeling, I can tell you, after being three weeks at sea, to run into a harbour which is no harbour, and to land upon a shore which is only half land, and which seems each moment about to roll away in waves from under your feet. Our fellow-passengers, several of whom had now landed and joined us, gazed about them as puzzled and bewildered as we were, and hastened into the blockhouse with a speed which showed them to be assailed by the same uneasy feeling as ourselves. Looking out from the blockhouse, the interminable expanse of meadow and ocean was blended into one vast plain, out of which the building rose like a diminutive island. It was with a sensation of real relief that we once more found ourselves on board our schooner.

It took us three full days to ascend the river Brazos to the town of Brazoria, a distance of only thirty miles. On the first day, nothing but the everlasting meadow was to be seen on either hand; but, on the second, we got nearer to islands: the pasture became a park, dotted with magnificent groups of trees. Not a sign of man was visible in this stupendous park—a boundless ocean of grass and foliage. An ocean of this kind has a far more powerful effect upon those who for the first time wander through its solitudes than has an ocean of

water. We saw this exemplified in our travelling companions, land-seekers like ourselves, with the sole difference that, not being overburthened with the circulating medium, they had come without scrip. They were by no means of the class of sentimental travellers—nothing of the Yorick about them—but, on the contrary, were wild, rough fellows, who had played all sorts of mad pranks during the three weeks' voyage. Here, however, they all, without exception, became quiet—nay, sedate and serious. The very wildest of them, and some of them really were as rude and desperate a lot as ever roamed the world round in search of adventures—grew taciturn, and gave utterance to none of the coarse oaths and horrible blasphemies with which, when at sea, they had frequently disgusted us. They behaved like people who had just entered a church. All their countenances wore an expression of gravity and awe. And, in a certain sense, we surely might be said to have entered one of God's temples; for what more noble temple could be erected in his honour than the magnificent scene around us! All was so still, and solemn, and majestic! Forest and meadow, trees and grass, all so pure and fresh, as if just from the hand of the mighty and eternal Artificer. No trace of man's sinful hand, but all the beautiful, immaculate work of God!

Fifteen miles above the mouth of the river Brazos, we entered the first forest. Sycamores,

and, further on, pecan-trees, waved on either hand over the water. We saw a herd of deer, and a large flock of wild turkeys, both of which, already tolerably shy, took to flight on our appearance. The quality of the land was, as will be easily imagined, the point to which our attention was chiefly directed. On the coast we had found it light and sandy, with a very thin crust of good soil, but without any signs of swamp or slime; further from the sea, the crust or fertile surface increased in thickness from one to four—eight—twelve—at last fifteen—and, at Brazoria, twenty feet over the bed of sand and loam. As yet we had seen nothing like a hillock or a stone; and indeed it would have been very difficult, in a district a hundred miles broad and long, to have found a stone as big as a pigeon's egg. On the other hand, there was wood in plenty for houses and fences; so we had no cause for anxiety in that respect. Our hopes grew brighter each mile that we advanced.

On our arrival at Brazoria, however, those sanguine hopes received a cruel blow. At the time I speak of—namely, in the year 1832—Brazoria was an important town—for Texas, that is to say—consisting of above thirty houses, three of which were of brick, three of boards, and the remainder of logs, all thoroughly American, with the streets arranged in the American manner, in straight lines and at right angles to each other. The only objection to the place was, that in the spring, at the season of

the floods, it was all under water ; but the worthy Brazorians overlooked this little inconvenience, in consideration of the inexhaustible fertility of the soil. It was early in March when we arrived, but we found already an abundance of new potatoes, beans, peas, and the most delicious artichokes that ever rejoiced an epicure. But we also found something else, much less agreeable to my friend and myself, and that was, that our scrip was not quite so good as it might be, and—like much other scrips, past, present, and to come—bore a stronger resemblance to waste paper than to bank-notes. Our unpleasant doubts became a fatal certainty on the arrival of William Austin, son of Colonel Austin. He gave us to read the report of the proceedings of the Mexican congress, after perusing which, we were within an ace of lighting our cigars with our certificates.

It appeared that, in the year 1824, the Mexican Congress had passed an act, having for its object the encouragement of emigration from the United States to Texas. In consequence of this act, an agreement was entered into with contractors, or *empresarios*, as they call them in Mexico, who bound themselves to bring a certain number of settlers into Texas within a given time, at their own charges, and without any expense to the Mexican government. On the other hand, the Mexican government had engaged to furnish land to these emigrants at the rate of five square leagues

to every hundred families ; but to this agreement the special condition was attached, that all settlers should be, or become, Roman Catholics. Failing this, and until they gave satisfactory proofs of their belonging to the Church of Rome, the validity of their claims to the land was not recognised, and they were liable any day to be turned out of the country at the point of the bayonet.

Of all this, the New York "Galveston-Bay-and-Texas-Land-Company," like smart Yankees as they were, had wisely said not a word to us, but had sold us the land with the assurance that it had been placed at their disposal by the Mexican government, on the sole condition of their importing into it, within the year, a certain number of settlers. Such was the tenor of their verbal and written declarations, such the tenor of the scrip ; trusting to which, we had set out on our wild-goose chase. Clear it now was that we had been duped and taken in ; equally evident that the Roman Catholic Mexican government would have nothing to say to us heretics.

This information threw us into no small perplexity. Our Yankee friends at Brazoria, however, laughed at our dilemma, and told us that we were only in the same plight as hundreds of our countrymen, who had come to Texas in total ignorance of this condition, but who had not the less taken possession of their land and settled there ; that they themselves were amongst the number, and

that, although it was just as likely they would turn negroes as Roman Catholics, they had no idea of being turned out of their houses and plantations; that, at any rate, if the Mexicans tried it, they had their rifles with them, and should be apt, they reckoned, to burn powder before they allowed themselves to be kicked off such an almighty fine piece of soil. So, after a while, we began to think, that as we had paid our money and come so far, we might do as others had done before us—occupy our land and wait the course of events. The next day we each bought a horse, or *mustang*, as they call them there, which animals were selling at Brazoria for next to nothing, and rode out into the prairie to look for a convenient spot to settle.

These mustangs are small horses, rarely above fourteen hands high, and are descended from the Spanish breed introduced by the original conquerors of the country. During the three centuries that have elapsed since the conquest of Mexico, they have increased and multiplied to an extraordinary extent, and are to be found in vast droves in the Texan prairies, although they now begin to be somewhat scarcer. They are taken with the *lasso*, concerning which instrument or weapon I will here say a word or two, notwithstanding that it has been often described.

The lasso is usually from twenty to thirty feet long, very flexible, and composed of strips of twisted ox-hide. One end is fastened to the saddle, and

the other, which forms a running noose, held in the hand of the hunter, who, thus equipped, rides out into the prairie. When he discovers a troop of wild horses, he manoeuvres to get to windward of them, and then to approach as near to them as possible. If he be an experienced hand, the horses seldom or never escape him; and as soon as he finds himself within twenty or thirty feet of them, he throws the noose with unerring aim over the neck of the one he has selected for his prey. This done, he turns his own horse sharp round, gives him the spur, and gallops away, dragging his unfortunate captive after him, breathless, and with his windpipe so compressed by the noose, that he is unable to make the smallest resistance, but, after a few yards, falls headlong to the ground, and lies motionless and almost lifeless, sometimes indeed badly hurt and disabled. From that day forward, the horse which has been thus caught never forgets the lasso; the mere sight of it makes him tremble in every limb; and, however wild he may be, it is sufficient to show it to him, or to lay it on his neck, to render him as tame and docile as a lamb.

The horse taken, next comes the breaking in, which is effected in a no less brutal manner than his capture. The eyes of the unfortunate animal are covered with a bandage, and a tremendous bit, a pound weight or more, clapped into his mouth; the horsebreaker puts on a pair of spurs six inches long, with rowels like penknives, and jumping

on his back, urges him to his very utmost speed. If the horse tries to rear, or turns restive, one pull, and not a very hard one either, at the instrument of torture they call a bit, is sufficient to tear his mouth to shreds, and cause the blood to flow in streams. I have myself seen horses' teeth broken with these barbarous bits. The poor beast whinnies and groans with pain and terror; but there is no help for him; the spurs are at his flanks, and on he goes full gallop, till he is ready to sink from fatigue and exhaustion. He then has a quarter of an hour's rest allowed him; but scarcely has he recovered breath, which has been ridden and spurred out of his body, when he is again mounted, and has to go through the same violent process as before. If he breaks down during this rude trial, he is either knocked on the head or driven away as useless; but if he holds out, he is marked with a hot iron, and left to graze on the prairie. Henceforward, there is no particular difficulty in catching him when wanted; his wildness is completely punished out of him, but for it is substituted the most confirmed vice and malice that can possibly be conceived. These mustangs are unquestionably the most deceitful and spiteful of all the equine race. They seem perpetually looking out for an opportunity of playing their master a trick; and very soon after I got possession of mine, I was near paying for him in a way that I had certainly not calculated upon.

We were going to Bolivar, and had to cross the river Brazos. I was the last but one to get into the boat, and was leading my horse carelessly by the bridle. Just as I was about to step in, a sudden jerk, and a cry of "Mind your beast!" made me jump on one side; and lucky was it that I did so. My mustang had suddenly sprung back, reared up, and then thrown himself forward upon me with such force and fury, that, as I got out of his way, his fore feet went completely through the bottom of the boat. I never in my life saw an animal in such a paroxysm of rage. He curled up his lips till his whole range of teeth was visible, his eyes literally shot fire, the foam flew from his mouth, and he gave a wild screaming neigh that had something quite diabolical in its sound. Whilst I stood perfectly thunderstruck at this outbreak, one of the party took a lasso and very quietly laid it over the animal's neck. The effect was magical. With closed mouth, drooping ears, and head low, there stood the mustang, meek and docile as any old jackass. The change was so sudden and comical, that we all burst out laughing; although, when I came to reflect on the danger I had run, it required all my love of horses to prevent me from shooting the brute upon the spot.

Mounted upon this ticklish steed, and in company with my friend, I made various excursions to Bolivar, Marion, Columbia, Anahuac, incipient cities consisting of from five to twenty houses. We

also visited numerous plantations and clearings, to the owners of some of which we were known, or had messages of introduction ; but either with or without such recommendations, we always found a hearty welcome and hospitable reception, and it was rare that we were allowed to pay for our entertainment.

We arrived one day at a clearing, which lay a few miles off the way from Harrisburg to San Felipe de Austin, and belonged to a Mr Neal. He had been three years in the country, occupying himself with the breeding of cattle, which is unquestionably the most agreeable, as well as profitable, occupation that can be followed in Texas. He had between seven and eight hundred head of cattle, and from fifty to sixty horses, all mustangs. His plantation, like nearly all the plantations in Texas at that time, was as yet in a very rough state ; and his house, although roomy and comfortable enough inside, was built of unhewn tree-trunks, in true backwoodsman style. It was situated on the border of one of the islands, or groups of trees, between two gigantic sycamores, which sheltered it from the sun and wind. In front, and as far as could be seen, lay the prairie, with its waving grass and many-coloured flowers ; behind the dwelling arose the cluster of forest trees in all their primeval majesty, laced and bound together by an infinity of wild vines, which shot their tendrils and clinging branches

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hundreds of feet upwards to the very top of the trees, embracing and covering the whole island with a green network, and converting it into an immense bower of vine leaves, which would have been no unsuitable abode for Bacchus and his train.

These islands are one of the most enchanting features of Texan scenery. Of infinite variety and beauty of form, and unrivalled in the growth and magnitude of the trees composing them, they are of all shapes—circular, parallelograms, hexagons, octagons—some again twisting and winding like dark-green snakes over the brighter surface of the prairie. In no park or artificially laid-out grounds could anything be found at all equalling these natural shrubberies in beauty and symmetry. In the morning and evening especially, when surrounded by a sort of veil of light-greyish mist, and with the horizontal beams of the rising or setting sun gleaming through them, they offer pictures which it is impossible to weary of admiring.

Mr Neal was a jovial Kentuckian, and he received us with the greatest hospitality, only asking in return all the news we could give him from the States. It is difficult to imagine, without having witnessed it, the feverish eagerness and curiosity with which all intelligence from their native country is sought after and listened to by these dwellers in the desert. Men, women, and children crowded round us; and though we had arrived in the after-

noon, it was near sunrise before we could escape from the inquiries by which we were overwhelmed, and retire to the beds that had been prepared for us.

I had not slept very long when I was roused by our worthy host. He was going out to catch twenty or thirty oxen, wanted for the market at New Orleans. As the kind of chase which takes place after these animals is very interesting, and rarely dangerous, we willingly accepted the invitation to accompany him; and having dressed and breakfasted in all haste, got upon our mustangs and rode off into the prairie.

The party was half a dozen strong, consisting of Mr Neal, my friend and myself, and three negroes. What we had to do was to drive the cattle, which were grazing on the prairie in herds of from thirty to fifty head, to the house, and then those selected for the market were to be taken with the lasso and sent off to Brazoria.

After riding four or five miles, we came in sight of a drove; splendid animals, standing very high, and of most symmetrical form. The horns of these cattle are of unusual length, and, in the distance, have more the appearance of stags' antlers than of bulls' horns. We approached the herd to within a quarter of a mile. They remained quite quiet. We rode round them, and in like manner got in rear of a second and third drove, and then spread out, so as to form a half circle and drive the cattle towards the house.

Hitherto my mustang had behaved exceedingly well, cantering freely along, and not attempting to play any tricks. I had scarcely, however, left the remainder of the party a couple of hundred yards, when the devil by which he was possessed began to wake up. The mustangs belonging to the plantation were grazing some three quarters of a mile off; and no sooner did my beast catch sight of them, than he commenced practising every species of jump and leap that it is possible for a horse to execute, and many of a nature so extraordinary, that I should have thought no brute that ever went on four legs would have been able to accomplish them. He shied, reared, pranced, leaped forwards, backwards, and sideways; in short, played such infernal pranks, that, although a practised rider, I found it no easy matter to keep my seat. I heartily regretted that I had brought no lasso with me, which would have tamed him at once, and that, contrary to Mr Neal's advice, I had put on my American bit instead of a Mexican one. Without these auxiliaries, all my horsemanship was useless. The brute galloped like a mad creature some five hundred yards, caring nothing for my efforts to stop him; and then, finding himself close to the troop of mustangs, he stopped suddenly short, threw his head between his fore-legs, and his hind feet into the air, with such vicious violence, that I was pitched clean out of the saddle. Before I well knew where I was, I had the satisfaction of

seeing him put his fore feet on the bridle, pull bit and bridoon out of his mouth, and then, with a neigh of exultation, spring into the midst of the herd of mustangs.

I got up out of the long grass in a towering passion. One of the negroes who was nearest to me came galloping to my assistance, and begged me to let the beast run for a while, and that when Anthony, the huntsman, came, he would soon catch him. I was too angry to listen to reason, and I ordered him to get off his horse, and let me mount. The black begged and prayed of me not to ride after the brute; and Mr Neal, who was some distance off, shouted to me, as loud as he could, for Heaven's sake, to stop; that I did not know what it was to chase a wild horse in a Texan prairie, and that I must not fancy myself in the meadows of Louisiana or Florida. I paid no attention to all this—I was in too great a rage at the trick the beast had played me; and, jumping on the negro's horse, I galloped away like mad.

My rebellious steed was grazing quietly with his companions, and he allowed me to come within a couple of hundred paces of him; but just as I had prepared the lasso, which was fastened to the negro's saddle-bow, he gave a start, and galloped off some distance further, I after him. Again he made a pause, and munched a mouthful of grass—then off again for another half mile. This time I had great hopes of catching him, for he let me

come within a hundred yards ; but, just as I was creeping up to him, away he went with one of his shrill neighs. When I galloped fast, he went faster ; when I rode slowly, he slackened his pace. At least ten times did he let me approach him within a couple of hundred yards, without for that being a bit nearer getting hold of him. It was certainly high time to desist from such a mad chase, but I never dreamed of doing so ; and indeed the longer it lasted, the more obstinate I got. I rode on after the beast, who let me come nearer and nearer, and then darted off again with his loud, laughing neigh. It was this infernal neigh that made me so savage—there was something spiteful and triumphant in it, as though the animal knew he was making a fool of me, and exulted in so doing. At last, however, I got so sick of my horse-hunt that I determined to make a last trial, and, if that failed, to turn back. The runaway had stopped near one of the islands of trees, and was grazing quite close to its edge. I thought that, if I were to creep round to the other side of the island, and then steal across it, through the trees, I should be able to throw the lasso over his head, or, at any rate, to drive him back to the house. This plan I put in execution : rode round the island, then through it, lasso in hand, and as softly as if I had been riding over eggs. To my consternation, however, on arriving at the edge of the trees, and at the exact spot where, only a few

minutes before, I had seen the mustang grazing, no signs of him were to be perceived. I made the circuit of the island, but in vain—the animal had disappeared. With a hearty curse, I put spurs to my horse, and started off to ride back to the plantation.

Neither the plantation, the cattle, nor my companions, were visible, it is true; but this gave me no uneasiness. I felt sure that I knew the direction in which I had come, and that the island I had just left was one which was visible from the house, whilst all around me were such numerous tracks of horses, that the possibility of my having lost my way never occurred to me, and I rode on quite unconcernedly.

After riding for about an hour, I began to find the time rather long. I looked at my watch: it was past one o'clock. We had started at nine, and, allowing an hour and a half to have been spent in finding the cattle, I had passed nearly three hours in my wild and unsuccessful hunt. I began to think I must have got further from the plantation than I had as yet supposed.

It was towards the end of March, the day clear and warm, just like a May-day in the Southern States. The sun now shone brightly out, but the early part of the morning had been somewhat foggy; and as I had only arrived at the plantation the day before, and had passed the whole afternoon and evening indoors, I had had no opportunity of

getting acquainted with the bearings of the house. This reflection made me rather uneasy, particularly when I remembered the entreaties of the negro, and the loud exhortations Mr Neal addressed to me as I rode away. I said to myself, however, that I could not be more than ten or fifteen miles from the plantation, that I should soon come in sight of the herds of cattle, and that then there would be no difficulty in finding my way. But when I had ridden another hour without seeing the smallest sign either of man or beast, I got seriously uneasy. In my impatience, I abused poor Neal for not sending somebody to find me. His huntsman, I had heard, was gone to Anahuac, and would not be back for two or three days; but he might have sent a couple of his lazy negroes: or, if he had only fired a shot or two as a signal. I stopped and listened, in hopes of hearing the crack of a rifle. But the deepest stillness reigned around, scarcely the chirp of a bird was heard—all nature seemed to be taking the siesta. As far as the eye could reach was a waving sea of grass, here and there an island of trees, but not a trace of a human being. At last I thought I had made a discovery. The nearest clump of trees was undoubtedly the same which I had admired and pointed out to my companions soon after we left the house. It bore a fantastical resemblance to a snake coiled up and about to dart upon its prey. About six or seven miles from the plantation we had passed it on our

right hand, and if I now kept it upon my left, I could not fail to be going in a proper direction. So said, so done. I trotted on most perseveringly towards the point of the horizon where I felt certain the house must lie. One hour passed, then a second, then a third : every now and then I stopped and listened, but nothing was audible—not a shot nor a shout. But although I heard nothing, I saw something which gave me no great pleasure. In the direction in which we had ridden out, the grass was very abundant and the flowers scarce ; whereas the part of the prairie in which I now found myself presented the appearance of a perfect flower-garden, with scarcely a square foot of green to be seen. The most variegated carpet of flowers I ever beheld lay unrolled before me ; red, yellow, violet, blue—every colour, every tint was there ; millions of magnificent prairie roses, tuberoses, asters, dahlias, and fifty other kinds of flowers. The finest artificial garden in the world sinks into insignificance when compared with this parterre of nature's own planting. My horse could hardly make his way through the wilderness of flowers, and I for a time remained lost in admiration of this scene of extraordinary beauty. The prairie in the distance looked as if clothed with rainbows, that waved to and fro over its surface.

But the difficulties and anxieties of my situation soon banished all other thoughts, and I rode on with complete indifference through scenes which,

under other circumstances, would have captivated my entire attention. All the stories I had heard of mishaps in these endless prairies, recurred in vivid colouring to my memory—not mere back-woodsmen's legends, but facts well authenticated by persons of undoubted veracity, who had warned me, before I came to Texas, against venturing without guide or compass into these dangerous wilds. Even men who had been long in the country were often known to lose themselves, and to wander for days and weeks over these oceans of grass, where no hill or variety of surface offers a landmark to the traveller. In summer and autumn, such a position would have one danger the less—that is to say, there would be no risk of dying of hunger; for at those seasons the most delicious fruits—grapes, plums, peaches, and others—are to be found in abundance. But we were now in early spring, and although I saw numbers of peach and plum-trees, they were only in blossom. Of game also there was plenty, both fur and feather; but I had no gun, and nothing appeared more probable than that I should be starved, although surrounded by food, and in one of the most fruitful countries in the world. This thought flashed suddenly across me, and for a moment my heart sank within me as I first perceived the real danger of my position.

After a time, however, other ideas came to console me. I had been already four weeks in the country, and had ridden over a large slice of it in

every direction, always through prairies, and I had never had any difficulty in finding my way. True, but then I had always had a compass, and been in company. It was this sort of over-confidence and feeling of security that had made me adventure so rashly, and in spite of all warning, in pursuit of the mustang. I had not waited to reflect, that a little more than four weeks' experience was necessary to make one acquainted with the bearings of a district three times as big as New York State. Still I thought it impossible that I should have got so far out of the right track as not to be able to find the house before nightfall, although that was now rapidly approaching. Indeed, the first shades of evening, strange as it may seem, gave this persuasion increased strength. Home-bred and gently nurtured as I was, my life, before coming to Texas, had been by no means one of adventure, and I was so used to sleep with a roof over my head, that when I saw it getting dusk I felt certain I could not be far from the house. The idea fixed itself so strongly in my mind, that I involuntarily spurred my mustang, and trotted on, peering out through the now fast-gathering gloom, in expectation of seeing a light. Several times I fancied I heard the barking of the dogs, the cattle lowing, or the merry laugh of the children.

"Hurrah! there is the house at last—I see the lights in the parlour windows."

I urged my horse on, but when I came near the

house, it proved to be an island of trees. What I had taken for candles were fire-flies, that now issued in swarms from out of the darkness of the islands, and spread themselves over the prairie, darting about in every direction, their small blue flames literally lighting up the plain, and making it appear as if I were surrounded by a sea of Bengal fire. Nothing could be more bewildering than such a ride as mine, on a warm March night, through the interminable, never-varying prairie; overhead the deep blue firmament, with its hosts of bright stars; at my feet, and all around, an ocean of magical light, myriads of fire-flies floating upon the soft still air. It was like a scene of enchantment. I could distinguish every blade of grass, every flower, every leaf on the trees—but all in a strange unnatural sort of light, and in altered colours. Tuberoses and asters, prairie roses and geraniums, dahlias and vine branches, began to wave and move, to range themselves in ranks and rows. The whole vegetable world around me appeared to dance, as the swarms of living lights passed over it.

Suddenly, from out of the sea of fire, sounded a loud and long-drawn note. I stopped, listened, and gazed around me. It was not repeated, and I rode on. Again the same sound, but this time the cadence was sad and plaintive. Again I made a halt, and listened. It was repeated a third time in a yet more melancholy tone, and I recognised it

as the cry of a whip-poor-will. Presently it was answered from a neighbouring island by a katydid. My heart leaped for joy at hearing the note of this bird, the native minstrel of my own dear Maryland. In an instant the house where I was born stood before the eyesight of my imagination. There were the negro huts, the garden, the plantation, everything exactly as I had left it. So powerful was the illusion, that I gave my horse the spur, persuaded that my father's house lay before me. The island, too, I took for the grove that surrounded our house. On reaching its border, I literally dismounted, and shouted out for Charon Tommy. There was a stream running through our plantation, which, for nine months out of the twelve, was passable only by means of a ferry, and the old negro who officiated as ferryman was indebted to me for the above classical cognomen. I believe I called twice, nay, three times—but no Charon Tommy answered; and I awoke as from a pleasant dream, somewhat ashamed of the lengths to which my excited imagination had hurried me.

I now felt so weary and exhausted, so hungry and thirsty, and, withal, my mind was so anxious and harassed by my dangerous position, and by the uncertainty how I should get out of it, that I was really incapable of going any further. I felt quite bewildered, and stood for some time gazing before me, and scarcely even troubling myself to think. At length I mechanically drew my clasp-

knife from my pocket, and set to work to dig a hole in the rich black soil of the prairie. Into this hole I put the knotted end of my lasso, and then, filling in the earth and stamping it down with my foot, as I had seen others do since I had been in Texas, I passed the noose over my mustang's neck, and left him to graze, whilst I myself lay down outside the circle which the lasso would allow him to describe. An odd manner, it may seem, of tying up a horse; but the most convenient and natural one in a country where one may often find oneself fifty miles from any house, and five-and-twenty from a tree or bush.

I found it no easy matter to sleep, for on all sides I heard the howling of wolves and jaguars—an unpleasant serenade at any time, but most of all so in the prairie, unarmed and defenceless as I was. My nerves, too, were all in commotion; and I felt so feverish that I do not know what I should have done, had I not fortunately remembered that I had my cigar-case and a roll of tobacco, real Virginia *dulcissimus*, in my pocket—invaluable treasures in my present situation, and which on this, as on many other occasions, did not fail to soothe and calm my agitated thoughts.

Luckily, too, being a tolerably confirmed smoker, I carried a flint and steel with me; for otherwise, although surrounded by lights, I should have been sadly at a loss for fire. A couple of Havannahs did me an infinite deal of good, and after a while

I sank into the slumber of which I stood so much in need.

The day was hardly well broken when I awoke. The refreshing sleep I had enjoyed had given me new energy and courage. I felt hungry enough, to be sure, but light and cheerful, and I hastened to dig up the end of the lasso, and to saddle my horse. I trusted that, although I had been condemned to wander over the prairie the whole of the preceding day, as a sort of punishment for my rashness, I should now have better luck, and, having expiated my fault, be at length allowed to find my way. With this hope I mounted my mustang and resumed my ride.

I passed several beautiful islands of pecan, plum, and peach trees. It is a peculiarity worthy of remark, that these islands are nearly always of one sort of tree. It is very rare to meet with one where there are two sorts. Like the beasts of the forest, that herd together according to their kind, so does this wild vegetation preserve itself distinct in its different species. One island will be entirely composed of live oaks, another of plum, and a third of pecan trees; the vine only, common to them all, embraces them all alike with its slender but tenacious branches. I rode through several of these islands. They were perfectly free from bushes and brushwood, and carpeted with the most beautiful verdure possible to behold. I gazed at them in astonishment. It seemed incredible that nature,

abandoned to herself, should preserve herself so beautifully clean and pure, and I involuntarily looked around me for some trace of the hand of man. But none was there. I saw nothing but herds of deer, that gazed wonderingly at me with their large clear eyes, and when I approached too near, galloped off in alarm. What would I not have given for an ounce of lead, a charge of powder, and a Kentucky rifle! Nevertheless, the mere sight of the beasts gladdened me, and raised my spirits. They were a sort of society. Something of the same feeling seemed imparted to my horse, who bounded under me, and neighed merrily, as he cantered along in the fresh spring morning.

I was now skirting the side of an island of trees of greater extent than most of those I had hitherto seen. On reaching the end of it, I suddenly came in sight of an object whose extraordinary appearance far surpassed any of the natural wonders I had as yet beheld, either in Texas or the United States.

At the distance of about two miles rose a colossal mass, in shape somewhat like a monumental mound or tumulus, and apparently of the brightest silver. As I came in view of it, the sun was just covered by a passing cloud, from the lower edge of which the bright rays shot down obliquely upon this extraordinary phenomenon, lighting it up in the most brilliant manner. At one moment it

looked like a huge silver cone ; then took the appearance of an illuminated castle with pinnacles and towers, or the dome of some great cathedral ; then of a gigantic elephant, covered with trappings, but always of solid silver, and indescribably magnificent. Had all the treasures of the earth been offered me to say what it was, I should have been unable to answer. Bewildered by my interminable wanderings in the prairie, and weakened by fatigue and hunger, a superstitious feeling for a moment came over me, and I half asked myself whether I had not reached some enchanted region, into which the evil spirit of the prairie was luring me to destruction by appearances of supernatural strangeness and beauty.

Banishing these wild imaginings, I rode on in the direction of this strange object ; but it was only when I came within a very short distance that I was able to distinguish its nature. It was a live oak of most stupendous dimensions, the very patriarch of the prairie, grown grey in the lapse of ages. Its lower limbs had shot out in a horizontal, or rather a downward-slanting direction, and, reaching nearly to the ground, completed the base of a vast dome, several hundred feet in diameter, and full a hundred and thirty feet high. It had no appearance of a tree, for neither trunk nor branches were visible. It seemed a mountain of whitish-green scales, fringed with long silvery moss, that hung like innumerable beards from every bough

and twig. Nothing could better convey the idea of immense and incalculable age than the hoary beard and venerable appearance of this monarch of the woods. Spanish moss of a silvery grey draped the whole mass of wood and foliage, from the topmost bough down to the very ground; short near the top of the tree, but gradually increasing in length as it descended, until it hung like a deep fringe from the lower branches. I separated the vegetable curtain with my hands, and entered this august temple with feelings of involuntary awe. The change from the bright sunlight to the comparative darkness beneath the leafy vault was so great, that I at first could distinguish scarcely anything. But when my eyes got accustomed to the gloom, nothing could be more beautiful than the effect of the sun's rays, which, in forcing their way through the silvered leaves and mosses, took as many varieties of colour as if they had passed through a window of painted glass, and gave the rich, subdued, and solemn light observable in old cathedrals.

The trunk of the tree rose, free from all branches, full forty feet from the ground, rough and knotted, and of such enormous size that it might have been taken for a mass of rock covered with moss and lichens, whilst many of its boughs were nearly as thick as the trunk of any tree I had ever previously seen.

I was so absorbed in the contemplation of the

vegetable giant, that for a short space I almost forgot my troubles; but as I rode away from the tree they returned to me in full force, and my reflections were certainly of no very cheering or consolatory nature. I rode on, however, most perseveringly. The morning slipped away; it was noon, the sun stood high in the cloudless heavens. My hunger had now increased to an insupportable degree, and I felt as if something were gnawing within me—something like a crab tugging and riving at my stomach with his sharp claws. This feeling left me after a time, and was replaced by a sort of squeamishness, a faint sickly sensation. But if hunger was bad, thirst was worse. For some hours I suffered martyrdom. At length, like the hunger, it died away, and was succeeded by a feeling of sickness. The thirty hours' fatigue and fasting I had endured were beginning to tell upon my naturally strong nerves: I felt my reasoning powers growing weaker, and my presence of mind leaving me. A feeling of despondency came over me—a thousand wild fancies passed through my bewildered brain; whilst at times my head grew dizzy, and I reeled in my saddle like a drunken man. These weak fits, as I may call them, did not last long; and each time that I recovered I spurred my mustang onwards. But all was in vain—ride as far and as fast as I would, nothing was visible but a boundless sea of grass.

At length I gave up hope, except in that God

whose almighty hand was so manifest in the beauteous works around me. I let the bridle fall on my horse's neck, clasped my hands together, and prayed as I had never before prayed, so heartily and earnestly. When I had finished my prayer I felt greatly comforted. It seemed to me, that here in the wilderness, which man had not as yet polluted, I was nearer to God, and that my petition would assuredly be heard. I gazed cheerfully around, persuaded that I should yet escape the peril in which I stood. Just then, with what astonishment and inexpressible delight did I perceive, not ten paces off, the track of a horse!

The effect of this discovery was like an electric shock, and drew a cry of joy from my lips that made my mustang start and prick his ears. Tears of delight and gratitude to Heaven came into my eyes, and I could scarcely refrain from leaping off my horse and kissing the welcome signs that gave me assurance of succour. With renewed strength I galloped onwards; and had I been a lover flying to rescue his mistress from an Indian war party, I could not have displayed more eagerness than I did in following up the trail of an unknown traveller.

Never had I felt so thankful to Providence as at that moment. I uttered thanksgivings as I rode on, and contemplated the wonderful evidences of His skill and might that offered themselves to me on all sides. The aspect of everything seemed

changed, and I gazed with renewed admiration at the scenes through which I passed, and which I had previously been too preoccupied by the danger of my position to notice. The beautiful appearance of the islands struck me particularly, as they loomed in the distance, swimming in the bright golden beams of the noonday sun, dark spots of foliage in the midst of the waving grasses and many-hued flowers of the prairie. Before me lay the eternal flower-carpet with its innumerable asters, tuberoses, and mimosas—that delicate plant which, when approached, lifts its head, seems to look at you, and then droops and shrinks back in alarm. This I saw it do when I was two or three paces from it, and without my horse's foot having touched it. Its long roots stretch out horizontally in the ground, and the approaching tread of a horse or man is communicated through them to the plant, and produces this singular phenomenon. When the danger is gone by, and the earth ceases to vibrate, the mimosa may be seen again to raise its head, quivering and trembling, as though not yet fully recovered from its fears.

I had ridden on for three or four hours, following the track I had so fortunately discovered, when I came upon the trace of a second horseman, who appeared to have here joined the first traveller. It ran in a parallel direction to the one I was following.

Had it been possible to increase my joy, this

discovery would have done so. I could now entertain no doubt that I had hit upon the way out of this terrible prairie. It struck me as rather singular that two travellers should have met in this immense plain, which so few persons traversed ; but that they had done so was certain, for there were the tracks of the two horses, as distinct as possible. The trail was fresh, too, and it was evidently not long since the horsemen had passed. It might still be possible to overtake them ; and in this hope I rode on faster than ever, as fast, at least, as my mustang could carry me through the thick grass and flowers, which in some places were four or five feet high.

During the next three hours I passed over ten or twelve miles of ground ; but although the trail still lay plainly and broadly marked before me, I saw nothing of those who had left it. Still I persevered. I must overtake them sooner or later, provided I did not lose the track ; and that I was most careful not to do, keeping my eyes fixed upon the ground as I rode along, and never deviating from the line which the travellers had followed.

Thus the day passed away, and evening approached. I still retained hope and courage ; but my physical strength was giving way. The gnawing sensation of hunger increased. I felt sick and faint ; my limbs were heavy, my blood seemed chill in my veins, and all my senses grew duller under the influence of exhaustion, thirst, and hun-

ger. My eyesight was misty, my hearing less acute, the bridle felt cold and heavy in my fingers.

Still I rode on. Sooner or later I must find an outlet; the prairie must have an end somewhere. True, that the whole of Southern Texas is one vast prairie; but then there are rivers flowing through it, and if I could reach one of those, I should not be far from the abodes of men. By following the streams five or six miles up or down, I should be sure to find a plantation.

Whilst thus reasoning with and encouraging myself, I perceived the traces of a third horse, running parallel to the two which I had so long followed. This was indeed encouragement. It was certain that three travellers, arriving from different points of the prairie, and all going in the same direction, must have some object, must be repairing to some village or clearing; and where or what this was had now become indifferent to me, so long as I once more found myself in the habitations of men. I spurred on my mustang, who began to flag a little in his pace with the fatigue of our long ride.

The sun set behind the high trees of an island that bounded my view westward, and there being little or no twilight in those southerly latitudes, the broad day was almost instantaneously replaced by the darkness of night. I could proceed no further without losing the track of the three horsemen; and, as I happened to be close to an island, I fas-

tened my mustang to a branch with the lasso, and threw myself on the grass under the trees.

This night, however, I had no fancy for tobacco. Neither the cigars nor the *dulcissimus* tempted me. I tried to sleep, but in vain. Once or twice I began to doze, but was roused again by violent cramps and twitchings in all my limbs. I know of nothing more horrible than a night passed as I passed that one—faint and weak, enduring torture from hunger and thirst, striving after sleep, and never finding it. The sensation of hunger I experienced can only be compared to that of twenty pairs of pincers tearing at the stomach.

With the first grey light of morning I got up and prepared for departure. It was a long business, however, to get my horse ready. The saddle, which at other times I could throw upon his back with two fingers, now seemed of lead, and it was as much as I could do to lift it. I had still more difficulty in drawing the girths tight; but at last I accomplished this, and, scrambling upon my beast, rode off. Luckily my mustang's spirit was pretty well taken out of him by the last two days' work; for if he had been fresh, the smallest spring on one side would have sufficed to throw me out of the saddle. As it was, I sat upon him like an automaton, hanging forward over his neck, sometimes grasping the mane, and almost unable to use either rein or spur.

I had ridden on for some hours in this helpless

plight, when I came to a place where the three horsemen whose track I was following had apparently made a halt—perhaps had passed the previous night. The grass was trampled and beaten down in a circumference of some fifty or sixty feet, and there was a confusion in the horse-tracks as if they had ridden backwards and forwards. Fearful of losing the right trail, I was looking carefully about me to see in what direction they had recommenced their journey, when I noticed something white amongst the long grass. I got off my horse to pick it up. It was a piece of paper with my own name written upon it; and I recognised it as the back of a letter in which my tobacco had been wrapped, and which I had thrown away at my halting-place of the preceding night. I looked around, and recognised the island and the very tree under which I had slept or endeavoured to sleep. The horrible truth instantly flashed across me—the horse tracks I had followed were my own: since the preceding morning, I had been riding *in a circle!*

I stood for a few seconds thunderstruck by this discovery, and then sank upon the ground in utter despair. At that moment I should have been thankful to any one who would have knocked me on the head as I lay. All I wished for was to die as speedily as possible.

I remained I know not how long in a desponding, half insensible state upon the grass. Several

hours must have elapsed ; for when I got up, the sun was low in the western heavens. My head was so weak and wandering, that I could not well explain to myself how it was that I had been thus riding after my own shadow. Yet the thing was clear enough. Without landmarks, and in the monotonous scenery of the prairie, I might have gone on for ever following my horse's track, and going back when I thought I was going forwards, had it not been for the discovery of the tobacco-paper. I was, as I subsequently learned, in the Jacinto prairie, one of the most beautiful in Texas, full sixty miles long and broad, but in which the most experienced hunters never risked themselves without a compass. It was little wonder, then, that I, a mere boy of two-and-twenty, just escaped from college, should have gone astray in it.

I now gave myself up for lost, and with the bridle twisted round my hand, and holding on as well as I could by the saddle and mane, I let my horse choose his own road. It would perhaps have been better had I done this sooner. The beast's instinct would probably have led him to some plantation. When he found himself left to his own guidance, he threw up his head, snuffed the air three or four times, and then, turning round, set off in a contrary direction to that he was before following, and at such a brisk pace that it was as much as I could do to keep upon him. Every jolt

caused me so much pain, that I was more than once tempted to let myself fall off his back.

At last night came, and, thanks to the lasso, which kept my horse in awe, I managed to dismount and secure him. The whole night through I suffered from racking pains in head, limbs, and body. I felt as if I had been broken on the wheel; not an inch of my whole person but ached and smarted. My hands were grown thin and transparent, my cheeks fallen in, my eyes deep sunk in their sockets. When I touched my face, I could feel the change that had taken place; and as I did so, I caught myself once or twice laughing like a child. I was becoming delirious.

In the morning I could scarcely rise from the ground, so utterly weakened and exhausted was I by my three days' fasting, anxiety, and fatigue. I have heard say that a man in good health can live nine days without food. It may be so in a room, or in a prison, but assuredly not in a Texan prairie. I am quite certain that the fifth day would have seen the last of me.

I should never have been able to mount my mustang, but he had fortunately lain down, so I got into the saddle, and he rose up with me and started off of his own accord. As I rode along, the strangest visions passed before me. I saw the most beautiful cities that painter's fancy ever conceived, with towers, cupolas, and columns, whose summits lost themselves in the clouds; marble basins and fountains of bright sparkling water,

rivers flowing with liquid gold and silver, and gardens whose trees were bowed down with magnificent fruit—fruit which I had not strength to raise my hand and pluck. My limbs were heavy as lead, my tongue, lips, and gums, dry and parched. I breathed with the greatest difficulty, and within me was a burning sensation, as if I had swallowed hot coals; whilst my extremities, both hands and feet, did not appear to form a part of myself, but to be instruments of torture affixed to me, and causing me the most intense suffering.

I have a confused recollection of a sort of rushing sound, the nature of which I was unable to determine, so nearly had all consciousness left me; then of finding myself amongst trees, the leaves and boughs of which scratched and beat against my face as I passed through them; then of a sudden and rapid descent, with the broad bright surface of a river below me. I clutched at a branch, but my fingers lacked strength to retain their grasp—there was a hissing, splashing noise, and the waters closed above my head.

I soon rose, and endeavoured to strike out with my arms and legs, but in vain; I was too weak to swim, and again I went down. A thousand lights danced before my eyes; there was a noise in my brain as if a four-and-twenty pounder had been fired close to my ear. Just then a hard hand was wrung into my neckcloth, and I felt myself dragged out of the water. The next instant my senses left me.

CHAPTER II.

LYNCH LAW.

WHEN I recovered from my state of insensibility, and once more opened my eyes, I was lying on the bank of a small but deep river. My horse grazed quietly a few yards off, and beside me stood a man with folded arms, holding a wicker-covered flask in his hand. This was all I was able to observe; for my state of weakness prevented me from getting up and looking around me.

"Where am I?" I gasped.

"Where are you, stranger? By the Jacinto; and that you are *by* it, and not *in* it, is no fault of your'n, I reckon."

There was something harsh and repulsive in the tone and manner in which these words were spoken, and in the grating, scornful laugh which accompanied them, that jarred upon my nerves, and inspired me with a feeling of aversion towards the speaker. I knew he was my deliverer; that he had saved my life when my mustang, raging with thirst, had sprung head-foremost into the water;

that, without him, I must inevitably have been drowned, even had the river been less deep than it was ; and that it was by his care, and the whisky he had made me swallow, and of which I still had the flavour on my tongue, that I had been recovered from my death-like swoon. But had he done ten times as much for me, I could not have repressed the feeling of repugnance, the inexplicable dislike, with which the mere tones of his voice filled me. I turned my head away in order not to see him. There was a silence of some moments' duration.

"Don't seem as if my company was over and above agreeable," said the man at last.

"Your company not agreeable? This is the fourth day since I saw the face of a human being. During that time not a bit nor a drop has passed my tongue."

"Hallo! That's a lie!" shouted the man, with another strange, wild laugh. "You've taken a mouthful out of my flask ; not *taken* it, certainly, but it went over your tongue all the same. Where do you come from? The beast ain't your'n."

"Mr Neal's," answered I.

"See it is by the brand. But what brings you here from Mr Neal's? It's a good seventy mile to his plantation, right across the prairie. Ain't stole the horse, have you?"

"Lost my way—four days—eaten nothing."

These words were all I could articulate. I was too weak to talk.

"Four days without eatin'!" cried the man, with a laugh like the sharpening of a saw, "and that in a Texas prairie, and with islands on all sides of you! Ha! I see how it is. You're a gentleman—that's plain enough. I was a sort of one myself once. You thought our Texas prairies was like the prairies in the States. Ha, ha! And so you didn't know how to help yourself. Did you see no bees in the air, no strawberries on the airth?"

"Bees? Strawberries?" repeated I.

"Yes, bees, which live in the hollow trees. Out of twenty trees there's sure to be one full of honey. So you saw no bees, eh? Perhaps you don't know the creturs when you see 'em? Ain't altogether so big as wild-geese or turkeys. But you must know what strawberries are, and that they don't grow upon the trees."

All this was spoken in the same sneering, savage manner as before, with the speaker's head half turned over his shoulder, while his features were distorted into a contemptuous grin.

"And if I had seen the bees, how was I to get at the honey without an axe?"

"How did you lose yourself?"

"My mustang—ran away—"

"I see. And you after him. You'd have done better to let him run. But what d'ye mean to do now?"

"I am weak—sick to death. I wish to get to the nearest house—an inn—anywhere where men are."

"Where men are," repeated the stranger, with his scornful smile. "Where men are," he muttered again, taking a few steps on one side.

I was hardly able to turn my head, but there was something strange in the man's movement that alarmed me ; and, making a violent effort, I changed my position sufficiently to get him in sight again. He had drawn a long knife from his girdle, which he clutched in one hand, whilst he ran the fore-finger of the other along its edge. I now for the first time got a full view of his face, and the impression it made upon me was anything but favourable. His countenance was the wildest I had ever seen ; his bloodshot eyes rolled like balls of fire in their sockets ; his movements and manner were indicative of a violent inward struggle. He did not stand still for three seconds together, but paced backwards and forwards with hurried, irregular steps, casting wild glances over his shoulder, his fingers playing all the while with the knife, with the rapid and objectless movements of a maniac.

I felt convinced that I was the cause of the struggle visibly going on within him—that my life or death was what he was deciding upon. But, in the state I then was, death had no terrors for me. The image of my mother, sisters, and father, passed before my eyes. I gave one thought to my peaceful, happy home, and then looked upwards and prayed.

The man had walked off to some distance. I turned myself a little more round, and, as I did so, I caught sight of the same magnificent phenomenon which I had met with on the second day of my wanderings. The colossal live oak rose in all its silvery splendour, at the distance of a couple of miles. Whilst I was gazing at it, and reflecting on the strange ill-luck that had made me pass within so short a distance of the river without finding it, I saw my new acquaintance approach a neighbouring cluster of trees, amongst which he disappeared.

After a short time I again perceived him coming towards me with a slow and staggering step. As he drew near, I had an opportunity of examining his whole appearance. He was very tall and lean, but large-boned, and apparently of great strength. His face, which had not been shaved for several weeks, was so tanned by sun and weather, that he might have been taken for an Indian, had not the beard proved his claim to white blood. But his eyes were what most struck me. There was something so frightfully wild in their expression, a look of terror and desperation, like that of a man whom all the furies of hell were hunting and persecuting. His hair hung in long ragged locks over his forehead, cheeks, and neck, and round his head was bound a handkerchief, on which were several stains of a brownish-black colour. Spots of the same kind were visible upon his leathern jacket, breeches,

and mocassins ; they were evidently blood stains. His hunting-knife, which was nearly two feet long, with a rude wooden handle, was now replaced in his girdle, but in its stead he grasped a Kentucky rifle.

Although I did my utmost to assume an indifferent countenance, my features doubtless expressed something of the repugnance and horror with which the man inspired me. He looked loweringly at me for a moment from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"You don't seem to like the company you've got into," said he. "Do I look so very desperate, then? Is it written so plainly on my face?"

"What should there be written upon your face?"

"What? What? Them questions are for fools and children."

"I will ask you none ; but as a Christian, as a countryman, I beseech you——"

"Christian?" interrupted he, with a hollow laugh. "Countryman!" He struck the butt of his rifle hard upon the ground. "That is my countryman—my only friend!" he continued, as he examined the flint and lock of his weapon. "That releases from all troubles: that's a true friend. Pooh! perhaps it'll release you too—put you to rest."

These last words were uttered aside, and musingly.

"Put him to rest, as well as——. Pooh! One

more or less—Perhaps it would drive away that cursed spectre.”

All this seemed to be spoken to his rifle.

“Will you swear not to betray me?” cried he to me. “Else, one touch——”

As he spoke, he brought the gun to his shoulder, the muzzle pointed full at my breast.

I felt no fear. I am sure my pulse did not give a throb the more for this menace. So deadly weak and helpless as I lay, it was unnecessary to shoot me. The slightest blow from the butt of the rifle would have driven the last faint spark of life out of my exhausted body. I looked calmly, indifferently even, into the muzzle of the piece.

“If you can answer it to your God, to your and my Judge and Creator, do your will.”

My words, which from faintness I could scarcely render audible, had, nevertheless, a sudden and startling effect upon the man. He trembled from head to foot, let the butt of his gun fall heavily to the ground, and gazed at me with open mouth and staring eyes.

“This one, too, comes with his God!” muttered he. “God! and your and my Creator—and—Judge.”

He seemed hardly able to articulate these words, which were uttered by gasps and efforts, as though something had choked him.

“His and my—Judge”—groaned he again. “Can there be a God, a Creator and Judge?”

As he stood thus muttering to himself, his eyes suddenly became fixed, and his features horribly distorted.

"Do it not!" cried he, in a shrill tone of horror, that rang through my head. "It will bring no blessin' with it. I am a dead man! God be merciful to me! My poor wife! my poor children!"

The rifle fell from his hands, and he smote his breast and forehead in a paroxysm of the wildest fury and despair. It was frightful to behold the conscience-stricken wretch, stamping madly about, and casting glances of terror behind him, as though demons had been hunting him down. The foam flew from his mouth, and I expected each moment to see him fall to the ground in a fit of epilepsy. Gradually, however, he grew more tranquil.

"D'ye see nothin' in my face?" said he in a hoarse whisper, suddenly pausing close to where I lay.

"What should I see?"

He came yet nearer.

"Look well at me—*through* me, if you can. D'ye see nothin' now?"

"I see nothing," replied I.

"Ah! I understand; you can see nothin'. Ain't in a spyin' humour, I calkilate. No, no, that you ain't. After four days and nights fastin', one loses the fancy for many things. I've tried it for two

days myself. So, you are weak and faint, eh? But I needn't ask that, I reckon. You look bad enough. Take another drop of whisky; it'll strengthen you. But wait till I mix it."

As he spoke, he stepped down to the edge of the river, and scooping up the water in the hollow of his hand, filled up his flask with it. Then returning to me, he poured a little into my mouth.

Even the bloodthirsty Indian appears less of a savage when engaged in a compassionate act, and the wild desperado I had fallen in with seemed softened and humanised by the service he was rendering me. His voice sounded less harsh; his manner was calmer and milder.

"You wish to go to an inn?"

"For Heaven's sake, yes. These four days I have tasted nothing but a bit of tobacco."

"Can you spare a bit of that?"

"All I have."

I handed him my cigar-case, and the roll of *dulcissimus*. He snatched the latter from me, and bit into it with the furious eagerness of a wolf.

"Ah! the right sort this!" muttered he to himself. "Ah, young man, or old man—you're an old man, ain't you? How old are you?"

"Two-and-twenty."

He shook his head doubtingly.

"Can hardly believe that. But four days in the prairie, and nothin' to eat. Well, it may be so. But, stranger, if I had had this bit of tobacco

only ten days ago——A bit of tobacco is worth a deal sometimes. It might have saved a man's life!"

Again he groaned, and his accents were wild and unnatural.

"I say, stranger!" cried he in a threatening tone. "I say! D'ye see yonder live oak? D'ye see it? It's the Patriarch, and a finer and mightier one you won't find in the prairies, I reckon. D'ye see it?"

"I do see it."

"Ah! you see it," cried he fiercely. "And what is it to you? What have you to do with the Patriarch, or with what lies under it? I reckon you had best not be too curious that way. If you dare take a step under that tree——" He swore an oath too horrible to be repeated.

"There's a spectre there," cried he; "a spectre that would fright you to death. Better keep away."

"I will keep away," replied I. "I never thought of going near it. All I want is to get to the nearest plantation or inn."

"Ah! true, man—the next inn. I'll show you the way to it. I will."

"You will save my life by so doing," said I, "and I shall be ever grateful to you as my deliverer."

"Deliverer!" repeated he with a wild laugh. "Pooh! If you knew what sort of a deliverer—

Pooh ! What's the use of savin' a life, when—yet I will—I will save yours ; perhaps the cursed spectre will leave me then. Will you not ? Will you not ? ” cried he, suddenly changing his scornful mocking tones to those of entreaty and supplication, and turning his face in the direction of the live oak. Again his wildness of manner returned, and his eyes were fixed, as he gazed for some moments at the gigantic tree. Then darting away, he disappeared among the trees, whence he had fetched his rifle, and presently emerged again, leading a saddled horse with him. He called to me to mount mine, but seeing that I was unable even to rise from the ground, he stepped up to me, and with the greatest ease lifted me into the saddle with one hand, so light had I become during my long fast. Then taking the end of my lasso, he got upon his own horse and set off, leading my mustang after him.

We rode on for some time without exchanging a word. My guide kept up a sort of muttered soliloquy ; but as I was full ten paces in his rear, I could distinguish nothing of what he said. At times he would raise his rifle to his shoulder, then lower it again, and speak to it, sometimes caressingly, sometimes in anger. More than once he turned his head, and cast keen searching glances at me, as though to see whether I were watching him or not.

We had ridden more than an hour, and the

strength the whisky had given me was fast failing, so that I expected each moment to fall from my horse, when suddenly I caught sight of a kind of rude hedge, and, almost immediately afterwards, of the wall of a small blockhouse. A faint cry of joy escaped me, and I endeavoured, but in vain, to give my horse the spur. My guide turned round, fixed his wild eyes upon me, and spoke in a threatening tone.

"You are impatient, man! impatient, I see. You think now, perhaps——"

"I am dying," was all I could utter. In fact, my senses were leaving me from exhaustion, and I really thought my last hour was come.

"Pooh! dyin'! One don't die so easy. And yet—d——n!—it might be true."

He sprang off his horse, and was just in time to catch me in his arms as I fell from the saddle. A few drops of whisky, however, restored me to consciousness. My guide replaced me upon my mustang, and after passing through a potato ground, a field of Indian corn, and a small grove of peach-trees, we found ourselves at the door of the blockhouse.

I was so utterly helpless, that my strange companion was obliged to lift me off my horse, and carry me into the dwelling. He set me down upon a bench, passive and powerless as an infant. Strange to say, I was never better able to observe all that passed around me, than during the

few hours of physical debility that succeeded my immersion in the Jacinto. A blow with a reed would have knocked me off my seat, but my mental faculties, instead of participating in this weakness, seemed sharpened to an unusual degree of acuteness.

The blockhouse in which we now were was of the poorest possible description; a mere log hut, consisting of one room, that served as kitchen, sitting-room, and bedchamber. The door of rough planks swang heavily upon two hooks, which fitted into iron rings, and formed a clumsy substitute for hinges; a wooden latch and heavy bar served to secure it; windows, properly speaking, there were none, but in their stead a few holes covered with dirty oiled paper; the floor was of clay, stamped hard and dry in the middle, but out of which, at the sides of the room, a crop of rank grass was growing, a foot or more high. In one corner stood a clumsy bedstead, in another was a sort of bar or counter, on which were half a dozen drinking glasses of various sizes and patterns. The table consisted of four thick posts, firmly planted in the ground, and on which were nailed three boards that had apparently belonged to some chest or case, for they were partly painted, and there was a date, and the three first letters of a word upon one of them. A shelf fixed against the side of the hut supported an earthen pot or two, and three or four bottles, uncorked, and apparently

empty; and from some wooden pegs wedged in between the logs, hung suspended a few articles of wearing apparel of no very cleanly aspect.

Pacing up and down the hut with a kind of stealthy cat-like pace, was an individual, whose unprepossessing exterior was in good keeping with the wretched appearance of this Texan shebeen house. He was an undersized, stooping figure, red-haired and large-mouthed, with small reddish pig's eyes, which he seemed totally unable to raise from the ground, and whose lowering, hang-dog expression corresponded fully with the treacherous, restless, panther-like stealthiness of his step and movements. Without greeting us either by word or look, this personage dived into a dark corner of the tenement, brought out a full bottle, and, placing it and glasses upon the table, resumed the monotonous exercise in which he had been indulging on our entrance.

My guide and deliverer said nothing whilst the tavern-keeper was getting out the bottle, although he watched all his movements with a keen and suspicious eye. He now filled a large glass of spirits, and tossed it off at a single draught. When he had done this, he spoke for the first time.

"Johnny!"

Johnny made no answer.

"This gentleman has eaten nothing for four days."

"Indeed," replied Johnny, without looking up,

or intermitting his sneaking, restless walk from one corner of the room to the other.

"I said four days, d'ye hear? Four days. Bring him tea immediately, strong tea, and then make some good beef-soup. I know you have bought some tea and rum and sugar. The tea must be ready directly, the soup in an hour at farthest, d'ye understand? And then I want some whisky for myself, and a beefsteak and potatoes. Now, tell all that to your Sambo."

Johnny did not seem to hear, but continued his walk, creeping along with noiseless step, and each time that he turned, giving a sort of spring like a cat or a panther.

"I've money, Johnny," said my guide. "Money, man, d'ye hear?" And so saying, he produced a tolerably full purse.

For the first time Johnny raised his head, gave an indefinable glance at the purse, and then, springing forward, fixed his small, cunning eyes upon those of my guide, whilst a smile of strange meaning spread over his repulsive features.

The two men stood for the space of a minute, staring at each other, without uttering a word. An infernal grin distended Johnny's coarse mouth from ear to ear. My guide gasped for breath.

"I've money," cried he at last, striking the butt of his rifle violently on the ground. D'ye understand, Johnny? Money; and a rifle too, if needs be."

He stepped to the table and filled another glass of raw spirits, which disappeared like the preceding one. Whilst he drank, Johnny stole out of the room so softly that my companion was only made aware of his departure by the noise of the wooden latch. He then came up to me, took me in his arms without saying a word, and carrying me to the bed, laid me gently down upon it.

"You make yourself at home," snarled Johnny, who just then came in again.

"Always do that, I reckon, when I'm in a tavern," answered my guide, quietly pouring out and swallowing another glassful. "The gentleman shall have your bed to-day. You and your Sambo may sleep in the pigsty. You have none though, I believe?"

"Bob!" screamed Johnny furiously.

"That's my name—Bob Rock."

"For the present," hissed Johnny, with a sneer.

"Just as yours is Johnny Down," replied Bob in the same tone. "Pooh! Johnny, guess we know one another?"

"Rayther calkilate we do," replied Johnny through his teeth.

"And have done many a day," laughed Bob.

"You're the famous Bob from Sodoma in Georgia?"

"Sodoma in Alabama, Johnny. Sodoma lies in Alabama," said Bob, filling another glass.

"Don't you know that yet, you who were above

a year in Columbus, doin' all sorts of dirty work?"

"Better hold your tongue, Bob," said Johnny, with a dangerous look at me.

"Pooh! Don't mind him; he won't talk, I'll answer for it. He's lost the taste for chatterin' in the Jacinto prairie. But Sodoma," continued Bob, "is in Alabama, man! Columbus in Georgia! They are parted by the Chatahoochie. Ah! that was a jolly life on the Chatahoochie. But nothin' lasts in this world, as my old schoolmaster used to say. Pooh! They've druv the Injuns a step further over the Mississippi now. But it was a glorious life—warn't it?"

Again he filled his glass and drank.

The information I gathered from this conversation as to the previous life and habits of these two men, had nothing in it very satisfactory or encouraging for me. In the whole of the south-western States there was no place that could boast of being the resort of so many outlaws and bad characters as the town of Sodoma. It is situated, or was situated, at least, a few years previously to the time I speak of, in Alabama, on Indian ground, and was the harbour of refuge for all the murderers and outcasts from the western and south-western parts of the Union. There, under Indian government, they found shelter and security; and frightful were the crimes and cruelties perpetrated at that place. Scarcely a day passed without an assassina-

tion, not secretly committed, but in broad sunlight. Bands of these wretches, armed with knives and rifles, used to cross the Chatahoochie, and make inroads into Columbus; break into houses, rob, murder, ill-treat women, and then return in triumph to their dens, laden with booty, and laughing at the laws. It was useless to think of pursuing them, or of obtaining justice, for they were on Indian territory; and many of the chiefs were in league with them. At length General Jackson and the government took it up. The Indians were driven over the Mississippi, the outlaws and murderers fled, Sodoma itself disappeared; and, released from its troublesome neighbours, Columbus is now as flourishing a State as any in the west.

The recollections of their former life and exploits seemed highly interesting to the two comrades; and their communications became more and more confidential. Johnny filled himself a glass, and the conversation soon increased in animation. I could understand little of what they said, for they spoke a sort of thieves' jargon. After a time, their voices sounded as a confused hum in my ears, the objects in the room got gradually less distinct, and I fell asleep.

I was roused, not very gently, by a mulatto woman, who poured a spoonful of tea into my mouth before I had well opened my eyes. She at first did not attend to me with much apparent

good-will ; but by the time she had given me half-a-dozen spoonfuls, her womanly sympathies were awakened, and her manner was kinder. The tea did me an infinite deal of good, and infused new life into my veins. I finished the cup, and the mulatto laid me down again on my pillow, with far more gentleness than she had lifted me up.

"Gor ! Gor !" cried she, "what poor young man ! Berry weak. Him soon better. One hour, massa, good soup."

"Soup ! What do you want with soup ?" grumbled Johnny.

"Him take soup. I cook it," screamed the woman.

"Worse for you if she don't, Johnny," said Bob ; "worse for you, I say."

Johnny muttered something in reply, but I did not distinguish what it was, for my eyes closed, and I again fell asleep.

It seemed as if I had not been five minutes slumbering when the mulatto returned with the soup. The tea had revived me, but this gave me strength ; and when I had taken it I was able to sit up in the bed.

Whilst the woman fed me, Bob ate his beef-steak. It was a piece of meat that might have sufficed for six persons, but the man was as hungry as if he had eaten nothing for three days. He cut off wedges half as big as his fist, swallowed them with ravenous eagerness, and, instead of bread, bit

into some unpeeled potatoes. All this was washed down with glass after glass of raw spirits, which had the effect of wakening him up, and infusing a certain cheerfulness into his strange humour. He still spoke more to himself than to Johnny, but his recollections seemed agreeable ; he nodded self-approvingly, and sometimes laughed aloud. At last he began to abuse Johnny for being, as he said, such a sneaking, cowardly fellow—such a treacherous, false-hearted gallows-bird.

"It's true," said he, "I am gallows-bird enough myself, but then I'm open, and no man can say I'm afeard ; but Johnny, Johnny, who"——

I do not know what he was about to say, for Johnny sprang towards him, and placed both hands over his mouth, receiving in return a blow that knocked him as far as the door, through which he retreated, cursing and grumbling.

I soon fell asleep again, and whilst in that state I had a confused consciousness of various noises in the room, loud words, blows, and shouting. Wearied as I was, however, I believe no noise would have fully roused me, although hunger at last did.

When I opened my eyes I saw the mulatto woman sitting by my bed, and keeping off the mosquitoes. She brought me the remainder of the soup, and promised, if I would sleep a couple of hours more, to bring me as good a beef-steak as ever came off a gridiron. Before the two hours

had elapsed I awoke, hungrier than ever. After I had eaten all the beefsteak the woman would allow me, which was a very moderate quantity, she brought me a beer-glass full of the most delicious punch I ever tasted. I asked her where she had got the rum and lemons, and she told me that it was she who had bought them, as well as a stock of coffee and tea ; that Johnny was her partner, but that he had done nothing but build the house, and badly built it was. She then began to abuse Johnny, and said he was a gambler, and worse still ; that he had had plenty of money once, but had lost it all ; that she had first known him in Lower Natchez, but he had been obliged to run away from there in the night to save his neck. Bob was no better, she said ; on the contrary—and here she made the gesture of cutting a man's throat—he was a very bad fellow, she added. He had got drunk after his dinner, knocked Johnny down, and broken everything. He was now lying asleep outside the door ; and Johnny had hidden himself somewhere.

How long she continued speaking I know not, for I again fell into a deep sleep, which this time lasted six or seven hours.

I was awakened by a strong grasp laid upon my arm, which made me cry out, more, however, from alarm than pain. Bob stood by my bedside ; the traces of the preceding night's debauch plainly written on his haggard countenance. His blood-

shot eyes were inflamed and swollen, and rolled with even more than their usual wildness; his mouth was open, and the jaws were stiff and fixed; he looked like one fresh from the perpetration of some frightful deed. I could fancy the first murderer to have worn such an aspect when gazing on the body of his slaughtered brother. I shrank back, horror-struck at his appearance.

"In God's name, man, what do you want?"

He made no answer.

"You are in a fever. You've the ague!"

"Ay, a fever," groaned he, shivering as he spoke; "a fever, but not the one you mean; a fever, young man, such as God keep you from ever having."

His whole frame shuddered as he uttered these words. There was a short pause.

"Curious that," continued he; "I've served more than one in the same way, but never thought of it afterwards—was forgotten in less than no time. Got to pay the whole score at once, I suppose. Can't rest a minute. In the open prairie it's the worst; there stands the old man, so plain, with his silver beard, and the spectre just behind him."

His eyes rolled, he clenched his fists, and striking his forehead furiously, rushed out of the hut.

In a few minutes he returned, apparently more composed, and walked straight up to my bed.

"Stranger, you must do me a service," said he abruptly.

"Ten rather than one," replied I; "anything that is in my power. Do I not owe you my life?"

"You're a gentleman, I see, and a Christian. You must come with me to the squire—the Alcalde."

"To the Alcalde, man? What must I go there for?"

"You'll see and hear when you get there; I've something to tell him—something for his own ear."

He drew a deep breath, and remained silent for a short time, gazing anxiously on all sides of him.

"Something," whispered he, "that nobody else must hear."

"But there's Johnny there. Why not take him?"

"Johnny!" cried he, with a scornful laugh; "Johnny! who's ten times worse than I am, bad as I be; and bad I am to be sure, but yet open and above board, always, till this time; but Johnny! he'd sell his own mother. He's a cowardly, sneakin', treacherous hound, is Johnny."

It was unnecessary to tell me this, for Johnny's character was written plainly enough upon his countenance.

"But why do you want me to go to the Alcalde?"

"Why does one want people before the judge? He's a judge, man; a Mexican one certainly, but

chosen by us Americans ; and an American himself, as you and I are."

"And how soon must I go?"

"Directly. I can't bear it any longer. It leaves me no peace. Not an hour's rest have I had for the last eight days. When I go out into the prairie, the spectre stands before me and beckons me on ; and if I try to go another way, he comes behind me and drives me before him under the Patriarch. I see him just as plainly as when he was alive, only paler and sadder. It seems as if I could touch him with my hand. Even the bottle is no use now ; neither rum, nor whisky, nor brandy, rid me of him ; it don't, by the 'tarnal.—Curious that ! I got drunk yesterday—thought to get rid of him ; but he came in the night and drove me out. I was obliged to go. Wouldn't let me sleep ; was forced to go under the Patriarch."

"Under the Patriarch ? the live oak ?" cried I, in astonishment. "Were you there in the night?"

"Ay, that was I," replied he, in the same horribly confidential tone ; "and the spirit threatened me, and said, says he, 'I will leave you no peace, Bob, till you go to the Alcalde and tell him.'"

"Then I will go with you to the Alcalde, and that immediately," said I, raising myself up in bed. I could not help pitying the poor fellow from my very soul.

"Where are you going ?" croaked Johnny, who

at this moment glided into the room. "Not a step shall you stir till you've paid."

"Johnny," said Bob, seizing his less powerful companion by the shoulders, lifting him up like a child, and then setting him down again with such force, that his knees cracked and bent under him;—"Johnny, this gentlemen is my guest, d'ye understand? And here is the reckonin', and mind yourself, Johnny—mind yourself, that's all."

Johnny crept into a corner like a flogged hound; the mulatto woman, however, did not seem disposed to be so easily intimidated. Sticking her arms in her sides, she waddled boldly forward.

"You not take him 'way, Massa Bob?" screamed she. "Him stop here. Him berry weak—not able for ride—not able for stand on him foot."

This was true enough. Strong as I had felt in bed, I could hardly stand upright when I got out of it.

For a moment Bob seemed undecided, but only for one moment; then, stepping up to the mulatto, he lifted her, fat and heavy as she was, in the same manner as he had done her partner, at least a foot from the ground, and carried her screaming and struggling to the door, which he kicked open. Then setting her down outside, "Silence!" roared he, "and some good strong tea instead of your cursed chatter, and a fresh beef-steak instead of your stinking carcass. That will strengthen the gentleman; so be quick about it, you old brown-skinned beast, you!"

I had slept in my clothes, and my toilet was consequently soon made, by the help of a bowl of water and a towel, which Bob made Johnny bring, and then ordered him to go and get our horses ready.

A hearty breakfast of tea, butter, Indian-corn bread, and steaks, increased my strength so much, that I was able to mount my mustang. I had still pains in all my limbs, but we rode slowly; the morning was bright, the air fresh and elastic, and I felt myself getting gradually better. Our path led through the prairie; the river, fringed with wood, on the one hand, the vast ocean of grass, sprinkled with innumerable islands of trees, on the other. We saw abundance of game, which sprang up under the very feet of our horses; but although Bob had his rifle, he made no use of it. He muttered continually to himself, and seemed to be arranging what he should say to the judge; for I heard him talking of things which I would just as soon not have listened to, if I could have helped it. I was heartily glad when we at length reached the plantation of the Alcalde.

It seemed a very considerable one, and the size and appearance of the framework house bespoke comfort and even luxury. The building was surrounded by a group of China trees, which I should have thought about ten years of age, but which I afterwards learned had not been planted half that time, although they were

already large enough to afford a very agreeable shade. Right in front of the house rose a live oak, inferior in size to the one in the prairie, but still of immense age and great beauty. To the left were some two hundred acres of cotton fields, extending to the bank of the Jacinto, which at this spot made a sharp turn, and winding round the plantation, enclosed it on three sides. Before the house lay the prairie, with its archipelago of islands, and herds of grazing cattle and mustangs; to the right, more cotton fields; and in rear of the dwelling, the negro cottages and out-buildings. There was a Sabbath-like stillness pervading the whole scene, which seemed to strike even Bob. He paused as though in deep thought, and allowed his hand to rest for a moment on the handle of the lattice door. Then with a sudden and resolute jerk, bespeaking an equally energetic resolve, he pushed open the gate, and we entered a garden planted with orange, banana, and citron trees, the path through which was enclosed between palisades, and led to a sort of front court, with another lattice-work door, beside which hung a bell. Upon ringing this, a negro appeared.

The black seemed to know Bob very well, for he nodded to him as to an old acquaintance, and said the squire wanted him, and had asked after him several times. He then led the way to a large parlour, very handsomely furnished

for Texas, and in which we found the squire, or more properly speaking, the Alcalde, sitting smoking his cigar. He had just breakfasted, and the plates and dishes were still upon the table. He did not appear to be much given to compliments or ceremony, or to partake at all of the Yankee failing of curiosity, for he answered our salutation with a laconic "good-morning," and scarcely even looked at us. At the very first glance, it was easy to see that he came from Tennessee or Virginia, the only provinces in which one finds men of his gigantic mould. Even sitting, his head rose above those of the negro servants in waiting. Nor was his height alone remarkable; he had the true West-Virginian build; the enormous chest and shoulders, and herculean limbs, the massive features and sharp grey eyes; altogether an exterior well calculated to impose on the rough backwoodsmen with whom he had to deal.

I was tired with my ride, and took a chair. The squire apparently did not deem me worthy of notice, or else reserved me for a later scrutiny; but he fixed a long, searching look upon Bob, who remained standing, with his head sunk on his breast.

The judge at last broke silence.

"So here you are again, Bob. It's long since we've seen you, and I thought you had clean forgotten us. Well, Bob, we shouldn't have broke

our hearts, I reckon; for I hate gamblers—ay, that I do—worse than skunks. It's a vile thing is play, and has ruined many a man, both in this world and the next. It's ruined you too, Bob."

Bob said nothing.

"You'd have been mighty useful here last week; there was plenty for you to do. My step-daughter arrived; but as you weren't to be found, we had to send to Joel to shoot us a buck and a few dozen snipes. Ah, Bob! one might still make a good citizen of you, if you'd only leave off that cursed play!"

Bob still remained silent.

"Now go into the kitchen and get some breakfast."

Bob neither answered nor moved.

"D'ye hear? Go into the kitchen and get something to eat. And, Ptoly"—added he to the negro—"tell Veny to give him a pint of rum."

"Don't want yer rum—aint thirsty"—growled Bob.

"Very like, very like," said the judge sharply. "Reckon you've taken 'too much already. Look as if you could swallow a wild cat alive. And you," added he, turning to me—"Ptoly, what the devil are you at? Don't you see the man wants his breakfast? Where's the coffee? Or would you rather have tea?"

"Thank you, Alcalde, I have breakfasted already."

"Don't look as if Ain't sick, are you? Where do you come from? What's happened to you? Ain't got the ague, have you? What are you doing with Bob?"

He looked keenly and searchingly at me, and then again at Bob. My appearance was certainly not very prepossessing, unshaven as I was, and with my clothes and linen soiled and torn. He was evidently considering what could be the motive of our visit, and what had brought me into Bob's society. The result of his physiological observations did not appear very favourable either to me or my companion. I hastened to explain.

"You shall hear how it was, judge. I am indebted to Bob for my life."

"Your life! Indebted to Bob for your life!" repeated the judge, shaking his head incredulously.

I related how I had lost my way in the prairie; had been carried into the Jacinto by my horse; and how I should inevitably have been drowned but for Bob's aid.

"Indeed!" said the judge, when I had done speaking. "So Bob saved your life! Is that true, Bob? Well, I am glad of it, Bob—very glad of it. Ah! if you could only keep away from that Johnny. I tell you, Bob, Johnny will be the ruin of you. Better keep out of his way."

This was spoken gravely and earnestly, the speaker pausing between the sentences to take a pull at his cigar, and a sup out of his glass.

"Yes, Bob," he repeated; "only keep away from Johnny!"

"It's too late," answered Bob.

"Don't know why it should be. Never too late to leave a debauched, sinful life; never, man!"

"Calkilate it is, though," replied Bob sullenly.

"You calculate it is?" said the judge, fixing his eyes on him. "And why do you calculate that? Take a glass—Ptoly, a glass—and tell me, man, why should it be too late?"

"I ain't thirsty, squire," said Bob.

"Don't talk to me of your thirst; rum's not for thirst, but to strengthen the heart and nerves, to drive away the blue devils. And a good thing it is, taken in moderation."

As he spoke he filled himself a glass, and drank half of it off. Bob shook his head.

"No rum for me, squire. I take no pleasure in it. I've something on my mind too heavy for rum to wash away."

"And what is that, Bob? Come, let's hear what you've got to say. Or, perhaps, you'd rather speak to me alone. It's Sunday to-day, and no business ought to be done; but for once, and for you, we'll make an exception."

"I brought the gentleman with me on purpose

to witness what I had to say," answered Bob, taking a cigar out of a box that stood on the table. Although the judge had not asked him to take one, he very quietly offered him a light. Bob smoked a whiff or two, looked thoughtfully at the judge, and then threw the cigar through the open window.

"It don't relish, squire; nothin' does now."

"Ah, Bob! if you'd leave off play and drink! They're your ruin; worse than ague or fever."

"It's no use," continued Bob, as if he did not hear the judge's remark; it must out. I fo't agin it, and thought to drive it away, but it can't be done. I've put a bit of lead into several before now, but this one"——

"What's that?" cried the judge, chucking his cigar away, and looking sternly at Bob. "What's up now? What are you saying about a bit of lead? None of your Sodoma and Lower Natchez tricks, I hope? They won't do here. Don't understand such jokes."

"Pooh! they don't understand them a bit more in Natchez. If they did, I shouldn't be in Texas"

"The less said of that the better, Bob. You promised to lead a new life here; so we won't rake up old stories."

"I did, I did!" groaned Bob; "and I meant it too; but it's all no use. I shall never be better till I'm hung."

I stared at the man in astonishment. The judge, however, took another cigar, lighted it, and, after puffing out a cloud of smoke, said, very unconcernedly—

"Not better till you're hung! What do you want to be hung for? To be sure, you should have been long ago, if the Georgia and Alabama papers don't lie. But we are not in the States here, but in Texas, under Mexican laws. It's nothing to us what you've done yonder. Where there is no accuser there can be no judge."

"Send away the nigger, squire," said Bob. "What a free white man has to say, shouldn't be heard by black ears."

"Go away, Ptoiy," said the judge. "Now then," added he, turning to Bob, "say what you have to say; but mind, nobody forces you to do it, and it's only out of good-will that I listen to you, for to-day's Sunday."

"I know that," muttered Bob; "I know that, squire; but it leaves me no peace, and it must out. I've been to San Felipe de Austin, to Anahuac, everywhere, but it's all no use. Wherever I go, the spectre follows me, and drives me back under the cursed Patriarch."

"Under the Patriarch!" exclaimed the judge.

"Ay, under the Patriarch!" groaned Bob. "Don't you know the Patriarch; the old live oak near the ford, on the Jacinto?"

"I know, I know!" answered the judge. "And what drives you under the Patriarch?"

"What drives me? What drives a man who—who"——

"A man who"—— repeated the judge, gently.

"A man," continued Bob, in the same low tone, "who has sent a rifle bullet into another's heart. He lies there, under the Patriarch, whom I"——

"Whom you?" asked the judge.

"*Whom I killed!*" said Bob, in a hollow whisper.

"Killed!" exclaimed the judge. "You killed him? Who?"

"Ah! who? Why don't you let me speak? You always interrupt me with your palaver," growled Bob.

"You are getting saucy, Bob," said the judge impatiently. "Go on, however. I reckon it's only one of your usual tantrums."

Bob shook his head. The judge looked keenly at him for a moment, and then resumed in a sort of confidential, encouraging tone.

"Under the Patriarch; and how did he come under the Patriarch?"

"I dragged him there, and buried him there," replied Bob.

"Dragged him there! Why did you drag him there?"

"Because he couldn't go himself, with more than half an ounce of lead in his body."

"And *you* put the half ounce of lead into him,

Bob? Well, if it was Johnny, you've done the country a service, and saved it a rope."

Bob shook his head negatively.

"It wasn't Johnny, although——But you shall hear all about it. It's just ten days since you paid me twenty dollars fifty."

"I did so, Bob; twenty dollars fifty cents; and I advised you at the same time to let the money lie till you had a couple of hundred dollars, or enough to buy a quarter or an eighth of Sitio land; but advice is thrown away upon you."

"When I got the money, I thought I'd go down to San Felipe, to the Mexicans, and try my luck, and, at the same time, see the doctor about my fever. As I was goin' there, I passed near Johnny's house, and fancied a glass, but determined not to get off my horse. I rode up to the window, and looked in. There was a man sittin' at the table, havin' a hearty good dinner of steaks and potatoes, and washin' it down with a stiff glass of grog. I began to feel hungry myself, and while I was considerin' whether I should 'light or not, Johnny came sneakin' out, and whispered to me to come in, that there was a man inside with whom somethin' might be done if we went the right way to work; a man who had a leather belt round his waist cram-full of hard Jackson; and that, if we got out the cards and pretended to play a little together, he would soon take the bait and join us.

"I wasn't much inclined," continued Bob; "but Johnny bothered me so to go in, that I got off my horse. As I did so, the dollars chinked in my pocket, and the sound was like the devil's voice 'ticing me to play.

"I went in; and Johnny fetched the whisky bottle. One glass followed another. There were beefsteaks and potatoes too, but I only eat a couple of mouthfuls. When I had drank two, three, ay, four glasses, Johnny brought the cards and dice. 'Hallo, Johnny!' says I; 'cards and dice, Johnny! I've twenty dollars fifty in my pocket. Let's have a game! But no more drink for me; for I know you, Johnny, I know you'—

"Johnny larfed slyly, and rattled the dice, and we sat down to play. I hadn't meant to drink any more, but play makes one thirsty; and with every glass I got more eager, and my dollars got fewer. I reckoned, however, that the stranger would join us, and that I should be able to win back from him; but not a bit of it: he sat quite quiet, and ate and drank as if he didn't see we were there. I went on playin' madder than ever, and before half an hour was over, I was cleaned out; my twenty dollars fifty gone to the devil, or what's the same thing, into Johnny's pocket.

"When I found myself without a cent, I *was* mad, I reckon. It warn't the first time, nor the hundredth, that I had lost money. Many bigger

sums than that—ay, hundreds and thousands of dollars had I played away—but they had none of them cost me the hundredth or thousandth part of the trouble to get that these twenty dollars fifty had; two full months had I been slavin' away in the woods and prairies to aim them, and caught the fever there. The fever I had still, but no money to cure it with. Johnny only larfed in my face, and rattled my dollars. I made a hit at him, which, if he hadn't jumped on one side, would have cured him of larfin' for a week or two.

"Presently, however, he came sneakin' up to me, and winkin' and whisperin'; and, 'Bob!' says he, 'is it come to that with you? are you grown so chicken-hearted that you don't see the beltful of money round his body?' said he, lodkin' at it. 'No end of hard coin, I guess; and all to be had for little more than half an ounce of lead.'"

"Did he say that?" asked the judge.

"Ay, that did he, but I wouldn't listen to him. I was mad with him for winning my twenty dollars; and I told him that, if he wanted the stranger's purse, he might take it himself, and be d——d; that I wasn't goin' to pull the hot chestnuts out of the fire for him. And I got on my horse, and rode away like mad.

"My head spun round like a mill. I couldn't get over my loss. I took the twenty dollars fifty more to heart than any money I had ever

gambled. I didn't know where to go. I didn't dare go back to you, for I knew you would scold me."

"I shouldn't have scolded you, Bob; or, if I had, it would only have been for your good. I should have summoned Johnny before me, called together a jury of twelve of the neighbours, got you back your twenty dollars fifty, and sent Johnny out of the country; or, better still, out of the world."

These words were spoken with much phlegm, but yet with a degree of feeling and sympathy which greatly improved my opinion of the worthy judge. Bob also seemed touched. He drew a deep sigh, and gazed at the Alcalde with a melancholy look.

"It's too late," muttered he; "too late, squire."

"Perhaps not," replied the judge; "but let's hear the rest."

"Well," continued Bob, "I kept ridin' on at random, and when evenin' came I found myself near the palmetto field on the bank of the Jacinto. As I was ridin' past it, I heard all at once a tramp of a horse. At that moment the queerest feelin' I ever had came over me; a sort of cold shiverin' feel. I forgot where I was; sight and hearin' left me; I could only see two things, my twenty dollars fifty, and the well-filled belt of the stranger I had left at Johnny's. Just then a voice called to me,

“ ‘Whence come, countryman, and whither going?’ it said.

“ ‘Whence and whither,’ answered I, as surly as could be; ‘to the devil at a gallop, and you’d better ride on and tell him I’m comin’.’

“ ‘You can do the errand yourself,’ answered the stranger, larfin’; ‘my road don’t lie that way.’

“ As he spoke, I looked round, and saw, what I was pretty sure of before, that it was the man with the belt full of money.

“ ‘Ain’t you the stranger I see’d in the inn yonder?’ asked he.

“ ‘And if I am,’ says I, ‘what’s that to you?’

“ ‘Nothin’,” said he; ‘nothin’, certainly.’

“ ‘Better ride on,’ says I, ‘and leave me quiet.’

“ ‘Will so, stranger; but you needn’t take it so mighty onkind. A word ain’t a tomahawk, I reckon,’ said he. ‘But I rayther expect your losin’s at play ain’t put you in a very church-goin’ humour; and, if I was you, I’d keep my dollars in my pocket, and not set them on cards and dice.’

“ It riled me to hear him cast my losin’s in my teeth that way.

“ ‘You’re a nice feller,’ said I, ‘to throw a man’s losses in his face. A pitiful chap *you* are,’ says I.

“ I thought to provoke him, and that he’d tackle me. But he seemed to have no fancy for a fight, for he said, quite humble like—

“ ‘I throw nothin’ in your face; God forbid I

should reproach you with your losses ! I'm sorry for you, on the contrary. Don't look like a man who can afford to lose his dollars. Seem to me one who airns his money by hard work.'

"We were just then halted at the further end of the cane-brake, close to the trees that border the Jacinto. I had turned my horse, and was frontin' the stranger. And all the time the devil was busy whisperin' to me, and pointin' to the belt round the man's waist. I could see where it was, plain enough, though he had buttoned his coat over it.

" 'Hard work, indeed,' says I ; 'and now I've lost everything ; not a cent left for a quid of baccy.'

" 'If that's all,' says he, 'there's help for that. I don't chew myself, and I ain't a rich man ; I've wife and children, and want every cent I've got, but it's one's duty to help a countryman. You shall have money for tobacco and a dram.'

"And so sayin', he took a purse out of his pocket, in which he carried his change. It was pretty full ; there may have been some twenty dollars in it ; and as he drew the string, it was as if the devil laughed and nodded to me out of the openin' of the purse.

" 'Halves !' cried I.

" 'No, not that,' says he ; 'I've wife and child, and what I have belongs to them ; but half a dollar——'

" 'Halves !' cried I again, 'or else——'

" 'Or else ?' repeated he ; and as he spoke, he

put the purse back into his pocket, and laid hold of the rifle which was slung on his shoulder.

" 'Don't force me to do you a mischief,' said he. 'Don't,' says he; 'we might both be sorry for it. What you're thinkin' of brings no blessin'."

"I was past seein' or hearin'. A thousand devils from hell possessed me.

" 'Halves!' I screeched out; and, as I said the word, he sprang out of the saddle, and fell back over his horse's crupper to the ground.

"I'm a dead man!" cried he, as well as the rattle in his throat would let him. "God be merciful to me! My poor wife, my poor children!"

Bob paused; he gasped for breath, and the sweat stood in large drops upon his forehead. He gazed wildly round the room. The judge himself looked very pale. I tried to rise, but sank back in my chair. Without the table, I believe I should have fallen to the ground.

There was a gloomy pause of some moments' duration. At last the judge broke silence.

"A hard, hard case!" said he. "Father, mother, children, all at one blow. Bob, you are a bad fellow; a very bad fellow; a great villain!"

"A great villain," groaned Bob. "The ball was gone right through his breast."

"Perhaps your gun went off by accident," said the judge, anxiously. "Perhaps it was his own ball."

Bob shook his head.

"I see him now, judge, as plain as can be, when

he said, 'Don't force me to do you a mischief; we might both be sorry for it.' But I pulled the trigger. His bullet is still in his rifle.

"When I saw him lie dead before me, I can't tell you what I felt. It warn't the first I had sent to his account; but yet I would have given all the purses and money in the world to have had him alive agin. I must have dragged him under the Patriarch, and dug a grave with my huntin'-knife, for I found him there afterwards."

"You found him there?" repeated the judge.

"Yes. I don't know how he came there. I must have brought him, but I recollect nothin' about it."

The judge had risen from his chair, and was walking up and down the room, apparently in deep thought. Suddenly he stopped short.

"What have you done with his money?"

"I took his purse, but buried his belt with him, as well as a flask of rum, and some bread and beef he had brought away from Johnny's. I set out for San Felipe, and rode the whole day. In the evenin', when I looked about me, expectin' to see the town, where do you think I was?"

The judge and I stared at him.

"Under the Patriarch. The ghost of the murdered man had driven me there. I had no peace till I'd dug him up and buried him agin. Next day I set off in another direction. I was out of tobacco, and I started across the prairie to Anahuac. Lord, what a day I passed! Wherever I went, *he*

stood before me. If I turned, *he* turned too. Sometimes he came behind me, and looked over my shoulder. I spurred my mustang till the blood came, hopin' to get away from him, but it was all no use. I thought when I got to Anahuac I should be quit of him, and I galloped on for life or death. But in the evenin', instead of being close to the salt-works as I expected, there was I agin, under the Patriarch. I dug him up a second time, and sat and stared at him, and then buried him agin."

"Queer that," observed the judge.

"Ay, very queer!" said Bob, mournfully. "But it's all no use. Nothin' does me any good. I shan't be better—I shall never have peace till I'm hung."

Bob evidently felt relieved now; he had in a manner passed sentence on himself. Strange as it may appear, I had a similar feeling, and could not help nodding my head approvingly. The judge alone preserved an unmoved countenance.

"Indeed!" said he: "indeed! You think you'll be no better till you're hung?"

"Yes," answered Bob, with eager haste. "Hung on the same tree under which *he* lies buried."

"Well, if you will have it so, we'll see what can be done for you. We'll call a jury of the neighbours together to-morrow."

"Thank ye, squire," murmured Bob, visibly comforted by this promise.

"We'll summon a jury," repeated the Alcalde,

"and see what can be done for you. You'll perhaps have changed your mind by that time."

I stared at him like one fallen from the clouds, but he did not seem to notice my surprise.

"There is, perhaps, some other way to get rid of your life, if you are tired of it," he continued. "We might hit upon one that would satisfy your conscience."

Bob shook his head. I involuntarily made the same movement.

"At any rate, we'll hear what the neighbours say," added the judge.

Bob stepped up to the judge, and held out his hand to bid him farewell. The other did not take it, and turning to me, said, "*You* had better stop here, I think."

Bob turned round impetuously.

"The gentleman must come with me."

"Why must he?" said the judge.

"Ask himself."

I again explained the obligations I was under to Bob, how we had fallen in with one another, and what care and attention he had shown me at Johnny's.

The judge nodded approvingly. "Nevertheless," said he, "you will remain here, and Bob will go alone. You are in a state of mind, Bob, in which a man is better alone, d'ye see; and so leave the young man here. Another misfortune might happen; and, at any rate, he's better here than at

Johnny's. Come back to-morrow, and we'll see what can be done for you."

These words were spoken in a decided manner, which seemed to have its effect upon Bob. He nodded assentingly, and left the room. I remained staring at the judge, and lost in wonder at these strange proceedings.

When Bob was gone, the Alcalde gave a blast on a shell, which supplied the place of a bell. Then seizing the cigar-box, he tried one cigar after another, broke them peevishly up, and threw the pieces out of the window. The negro, whom the shell had summoned, stood for some time waiting, whilst his master broke up the cigars and threw them away. At last the judge's patience seemed quite to leave him.

"Hark ye, Ptoly!" growled he to the frightened black, "the next time you bring me cigars that neither draw nor smoke, I'll make your back smoke for it. Mind that, now. There's not a single one of them worth a rotten maize-stalk. Tell that old coffee-coloured hag of Johnny's, that I'll have no more of her cigars. Ride over to Mr Ducie's and fetch a box. And, d'ye hear? tell him I want to speak a word with him and the neighbours. Ask him to bring the neighbours with him to-morrow morning. And mind you're home again by two o'clock. Take the mustang we caught last week. I want to see how he goes."

The negro listened to these various commands

with open mouth and staring eyes, then, giving a perplexed look at his master, shot out of the room.

"Whither away, Ptoly?" shouted the Alcalde after him.

"To Massa Ducie."

"Without a pass, Ptoly? And what are you going to say to Mr Ducie?"

"Him nebber send bad cigar again, him coffee-cullud hag. Massa speak to Johnny and neighbours. Johnny bring neighbours here."

"I thought as much," said the judge, with perfect equanimity. "Wait a minute; I'll write the pass, and a couple of lines for Mr Ducie."

This was soon done, and the negro despatched on his errand. The judge waited till he heard the sound of the horse's feet galloping away, and then, laying hold of the box of despised cigars, lit the first which came to hand. It smoked capitally, as did also one that I took. They were Principes, and as good as I ever tasted.

I passed the whole of that day alone with the judge, who, I soon found, knew various friends of mine in the States. I told him the circumstances under which I had come to Texas, and the intention I had of settling there, should I find the country to my liking. During our long conversation, I was able to form a very different, and much more favourable, estimate of his character, than I had done from his interview with Bob. He was the very man to be useful to a new country; of

great energy, sound judgment, enlarged and liberal views. He gave me some curious information as to the state of things in Texas ; and did not think it necessary to conceal from me, as an American, and one who intended settling in the country, that there was a plan in agitation for throwing off the Mexican yoke, and declaring Texas an independent republic. The high-spirited, and, for the most part, intelligent emigrants from the United States, who formed a very large majority of the population of Texas, saw themselves, with no very patient feeling, under the rule of a people both morally and physically inferior to themselves. They looked with contempt, and justly so, on the bigoted, idle, and ignorant Mexicans, whilst the difference of religion, and interference of the priests, served to increase the dislike between the Spanish and Anglo-American races.

Although the project was as yet not quite ripe for execution, it was discussed freely and openly by the American settlers. "It is the interest of every man to keep it secret," said the judge ; "and there can be nothing to induce even the worst amongst us to betray a cause, by the success of which he is sure to profit. We have many bad characters in Texas, the offscourings of the United States—men like Bob, or far worse than him ; but debauched, gambling, drunken villains though they be, they are the men we want when it comes

to a struggle ; and when that time arrives, they will all be found ready to put their shoulders to the wheel, use knife and rifle, and shed the last drop of their blood in defence of their fellow-citizens, and of the new and independent republic of Texas. At this moment we must wink at many things which would be severely punished in an older and more settled country ; each man's arm is of immense value to the State ; for on the day of battle we shall have, not two to one, but twenty to one opposed to us."

I was awakened the following morning by the sound of a horse's feet ; and, looking out of the window, saw Bob dismounting from his mustang. The last twenty-four hours had told fearfully upon him. His limbs seemed powerless, and he reeled and staggered in such a manner that I at first thought him intoxicated. But such was not the case. His was the deadly weariness caused by mental anguish. He looked like one just taken off the rack.

Hastily putting on my clothes, I hurried down stairs and opened the house door. Bob stood with his head resting on his horse's neck, and his hands crossed, shivering and groaning. When I spoke to him, he looked up, but did not seem to know me. I tied his horse to a post, and taking his hand, led him into the house. He followed like a child, apparently without the will or the power to resist ; and when I placed him a chair,

he fell into it with a weight that made it crack under him, and shook the house. I could not get him to speak, and was about to return to my room to complete my toilet, when I again heard the tramp of mustangs. This was a party of half-a-dozen horsemen, all dressed in hunting-shirts over buckskin breeches and jackets, and armed with rifles and bowie-knives; stout, daring-looking fellows, evidently from the south-western states, with the true Kentucky half-horse half-alligator profile, and the usual allowance of thunder, lightning, and earthquake. It struck me, when I saw them, that two or three thousand such men would have small difficulty in dealing with a whole army of Mexicans, if the latter were all of the pigmy, spindle-shanked breed I had seen on first landing. These giants could easily have walked away with a Mexican in each hand.

They jumped off their horses, and threw the bridles to the negroes in the usual Kentuckian devil-may-care style, and then walked into the house with the air of people who make themselves at home everywhere, and who knew themselves to be more masters in Texas than the Mexicans themselves. On entering the parlour, they nodded a "good morning" to me, rather coldly to be sure, for they had seen me talking with Bob, which probably did not much recommend me. Presently, four more horsemen rode up, and then a third party, so that there were now four-

teen of them assembled, all decided-looking men, in the prime of life and strength. The judge, who slept in an adjoining room, had been awakened by the noise. I heard him jump out of bed, and not three minutes elapsed before he entered the parlour.

After he had shaken hands with all his visitors, he presented me to them, and I found that I was in the presence of no less important persons than the Ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin; and that two of my worthy countrymen were corregidores, one a procurador, and the others *buenos hombres*, or freeholders. They did not seem, however, to prize their titles much, for they addressed one another by their surnames only.

The negro brought a light, opened the cigar-box, and arranged the chairs; the judge pointed to the sideboard and to the cigars, and then sat down. Some took a dram, others lit a cigar.

Several minutes elapsed, during which the men sat in perfect silence, as if they were collecting their thoughts, or as though it were undignified to show any haste or impatience to speak. This grave sort of deliberation, which is met with among certain classes, and in certain provinces of the Union, has often struck me as a curious feature of our national character. It partakes of the stoical dignity of the Indian at his council fire, and of the stern religious gravity of the early Puritan settlers in America.

During this pause Bob was writhing on his chair like a worm, his face concealed by his hands, his elbows on his knees. At last, when all had drunk and smoked, the judge laid down his cigar.

"Men!" said he.

"Squire!" answered they.

"We've a business before us, which I calculate will be best explained by him whom it concerns."

The men looked at the Squire, then at Bob, then at me.

"Bob Rock! or whatever your name may be, if you have aught to say, say it!" continued the judge.

"Said it all yesterday," muttered Bob, his face still covered by his hands.

"Yes, but you must say it again to-day. Yesterday was Sunday, and Sunday is a day of rest, and not of business. I will neither judge you, nor allow you to be judged, by what you said yesterday. Besides, it was all between ourselves, for I don't reckon Mr Morse as anything; I count him still as a stranger."

"What's the use of so much palaver, when the thing's plain enough?" said Bob peevishly, raising his head as he spoke.

The men stared at him in grave astonishment. He was really frightful to behold; his face of a sort of blue tint; his cheeks hollow; his beard wild and ragged; his blood-shot eyes rolling, and deep sunk in their sockets. His appearance was scarcely human.

"I tell you again," said the judge, "I will condemn no man upon his own word alone; much less you, who have been in my service, and eaten of my bread. You accused yourself yesterday, but you were delirious at the time—you had the fever upon you."

"It's no use, Squire," said Bob, apparently touched by the kindness of the judge. "You mean well, I see; but though you might deliver me out of men's hands, you couldn't rescue me from myself. It's no use—I must be hung—hung on the same tree under which the man I killed lies buried."

The men, or the jurors, as I may call them, looked at one another, but said nothing.

"It's no use," again cried Bob, in a shrill, agonising tone. "If he had attacked me, or only threatened me; but no, he didn't do it. I hear his words still, when he said, 'Do it not, man! I've wife and child. What you intend brings no blessin' on the doer.' But I heard nothin' then except the voice of the devil; I brought the rifle down—levelled—fired—"

The man's agony was so intense that even the iron-featured jury seemed moved by it. They cast sharp but stolen glances at Bob. There was a short silence.

"So you have killed a man?" said a deep bass voice at last.

"Ay, that have I!" gasped Bob.

"And how came that?" continued his questioner.

"How it came? You must ask the devil, or Johnny. No, not Johnny, he can tell you nothing; he was not there. No one can tell you but me; and I hardly know how it was. The man was at Johnny's, and Johnny showed me his belt full of money."

"Johnny!" exclaimed several of the jury.

"Ay, Johnny! He reckoned on winning it from him, but the man was too cautious for that; and when Johnny had plucked all my feathers, won my twenty dollars fifty——"

"Twenty dollars fifty cents," interposed the judge, "which I paid him for catching mustangs and shooting game."

The men nodded.

"And then, because he wouldn't play, you shot him?" asked the same deep-toned voice as before.

"No—some hours after—by the Jacinto, near the Patriarch—met him down there, and killed him."

"Thought there was something out o' the common thereaway," said one of the jury; "for as we rode by the tree a whole nation of kites and turkey buzzards flew out. Didn't they, Mr Heart?"

Mr Heart nodded.

"Met him by the river, and wanted halves of his money," continued Bob mechanically. "He said he'd give me something to buy a quid, and

more than enough for that, but not halves. 'I've wife and child,' said he——"

"And you?" asked the juror with the deep voice, which, this time, had a hollow sound in it.

"Shot him down," said Bob, with a wild, hoarse laugh.

There was a dead pause of some duration. The jury sat with eyes fixed upon the ground.

"And who was the man?" said a juror at last.

"Didn't ask him; and it warn't written on his face. He was from the States; but whether a hosier, or a buckeye, or a mudhead, is more than I can say."

"The thing must be investigated, Alcalde," said another of the jury, after a second pause.

"It must so," answered the Alcalde.

"What's the good of so much investigation?" grumbled Bob.

"What good?" repeated the Alcalde. "Because we owe it to ourselves, to the dead man, and to you, not to sentence you without having held an inquest on the body. There's another thing which I must call your attention to," continued he, turning to the jury; "the man is half out of his mind—not *compos mentis*, as they say. He's got the fever, and had it when he did the deed; he was urged on by Johnny, and maddened by his losses at play. In spite of his wild excitement, however, he saved that gentleman's life yonder, Mr Edward Nathaniel Morse."

"Did he so?" said one of the jury.

"That did he," replied I, "not only by saving me from drowning when my horse dragged me, half-dead and helpless, into the river, but also by the care and attention he forced Johnny and his mulatto to bestow upon me. Without him I should not be alive at this moment."

Bob gave me a look which went to my heart. The tears were standing in his eyes. The jury heard me in deep silence.

"It seems that Johnny led you on and excited you to this?" said one of the jurors.

"I didn't say that. I only said that he pointed to the man's money-bag, and said —— But what is it to you what Johnny said? I'm the man who did it. I speak for myself, and I'll be hanged for myself."

"All very good, Bob," interposed the Alcalde; "but we can't hang you without being sure you deserve it. What do you say to it, Mr Whyte? You're the procurador—and you, Mr Heart and Mr Stone? Help yourselves to rum or brandy; and, Mr Bright and Irwin, take another cigar. They're considerable tolerable the cigars — ain't they? That's brandy, Mr Whyte, in the diamond bottle."

Mr Whyte had got up to give his opinion, as I thought; but I was mistaken. He stepped to the sideboard, took up a bottle in one hand and a glass in the other, every movement being performed with the greatest deliberation.

"Well, Squire," said he, "or rather Alcalde—"

After the word "Alcalde," he filled the glass half full of rum.

"If it's as we've heard," added he, pouring about a spoonful of water on the rum, "and Bob has killed the man"—he continued, throwing in some lumps of sugar—"murdered him"—he went on, crushing the sugar with a wooden stamp—"I rather calkilate"—here he raised the glass—"Bob ought to be hung," he concluded, putting the tumbler to his mouth and emptying it.

The jurors nodded in silence. Bob drew a deep breath, as if a load were taken off his breast.

"Well," said the judge, who did not look over well pleased, "if you all think so, and Bob is agreed, I calculate we must do as he wishes. I tell you, though, I don't do it willingly. At any rate, we must find the dead man first, and examine Johnny. We owe that to ourselves and to Bob."

"Certainly," said the jury with one voice.

"You are a dreadful murderer, Bob, a very considerable one," continued the judge; "but I tell you to your face, and not to flatter you, there is more good in your little finger than in Johnny's whole hide. And I'm sorry for you, because, at the bottom, you are not a bad man, though you've been led away by bad company and example. I calculate you might still be reformed, and made very useful—more so, perhaps, than you think. Your rifle's a capital good one."

At these last words the men all looked up, and threw a keen inquiring glance at Bob.

"You might be of great service," continued the judge encouragingly, "to the country and to your fellow-citizens. You're worth a dozen Mexicans any day."

Whilst the judge spoke, Bob let his head fall on his breast, and seemed reflecting. He now looked up.

"I understand, Squire ; I see what you're drivin' at. But I can't do it—I can't wait so long. My life's a burthen and a sufferin' to me. Wherever I go, by day or by night, he's always there, standin' before me, and drivin' me under the Patriarch."

There was a pause of some duration. The judge resumed.

"So be it, then," said he with a sort of suppressed sigh. "We'll see the body to-day, Bob, and you may come to-morrow at ten o'clock."

"Couldn't it be sooner?" asked Bob impatiently.

"Why sooner? Are you in such a hurry?" asked Mr Heart.

"What's the use of palaverin'?" said Bob sulkily. "I told you already I'm sick of my life. If you don't come till ten o'clock, by the time you've had your talk out and ridden to the Patriarch, the fever 'll be upon me."

"But we can't be flying about like a parcel of wild geese, because of your fever," said the procurador.

"Certainly not," said Bob humbly.

"It's an ugly customer the fever, though, Mr Whyte," observed Mr Trace; "and I calculate we ought to do him that pleasure. What do you think, Squire?"

"I reckon he's rather indiscreet in his askin's," said the judge, in a tone of vexation. "However, as he wishes it, and if it is agreeable to you," added he, turning to the Ayuntamiento; "and as it's you, Bob, I calculate we must do what you ask."

"Thankee," said Bob.

"Nothing to thank for," growled the judge; "and now go into the kitchen and get a good meal of roast beef, d'ye hear?" He knocked upon the table. "Some good roast beef for Bob," said he to a negress who entered; "and see that he eats it. And get yourself dressed more decently, Bob—like a white man and a Christian, not like a wild redskin."

The negress and Bob left the room. The conversation now turned upon Johnny, who appeared, from all accounts, to be a very bad and dangerous fellow; and after a short discussion, they agreed to lynch him, in backwoodsman's phrase, just as coolly as if they had been talking of catching a mustang. When the men had come to this satisfactory conclusion, they got up, drank the judge's health and mine, shook us by the hand, and left the room and the house.

The day passed more heavily than the preceding

one. I was too engrossed with the strange scene I had witnessed to talk much. The judge, too, was in a very bad humour. He was vexed that a man should be hung who might render the country much and good service if he remained alive. That Johnny, the miserable, cowardly, treacherous Johnny, should be sent out of the world as quickly as possible, was perfectly correct, but with Bob it was very different. In vain did I remind him of the crime of which Bob had been guilty—of the outraged laws of God and man—and of the atonement due. It was no use. If Bob had sinned against society, he could repair his fault much better by remaining alive than by being hung; and as to anything else, God would avenge it in his own good time. We parted for the night, neither of us convinced by the other's arguments.

We were sitting at breakfast the next morning, when a man, dressed in black, rode up to the door. It was Bob, but so metamorphosed that I scarcely knew him. Instead of the torn and bloodstained handkerchief round his head, he wore a hat; instead of the leathern jacket, a decent cloth coat. He had shaved off his beard too, and looked quite another man. His manner had altered with his dress; he seemed tranquil and resigned. With a mild, submissive look, he held out his hand to the judge, who took and shook it heartily.

"Ah, Bob!" said he, if you had only listened

to what I so often told you ! I had those clothes brought on purpose from New Orleans, that, on Sundays at least, you might look like a decent and respectable man. How often have I asked you to put them on, and come with us to meeting, to hear Mr Bliss preach ? There is some truth in the saying, that the coat makes the man. With his Sunday coat, a man often puts on other and better thoughts. If that had been your case only fifty-two times in the year, you'd have learned to avoid Johnny before now."

Bob said nothing.

"Well, well ! I've done all I could to make a better man of you—all that was in my power."

"That you have," answered Bob, much moved. "God reward you for it !"

I could not help holding out my hand to the worthy judge ; and as I did so, I thought I saw a moisture in his eye, which he suppressed, however, and, turning to the breakfast table, bade us sit down. Bob thanked him humbly, but declined, saying that he wished to appear fasting before his offended Creator. The judge insisted, and reasoned with him, and at last he took a chair.

Before we had done breakfast, our friends of the preceding day began to drop in, and some of them joined us at the meal. When they had all taken what they chose, the judge ordered the negroes to clear away, and leave the room. This done, he seated himself at the upper end of the table, with

the Ayuntamiento on either side, and Bob facing him.

"Mr Whyte," said the Alcalde, "have you, as procurador, anything to state?"

"Yes, Alcalde," replied the procurador. "In virtue of my office, I made a search in the place mentioned by Bob Rock, and there found the body of a man who had met his death by a gunshot wound. I also found a belt full of money, and several letters of recommendation to different planters, from which it appears that the man was on his way from Illinois to San Felipe, to buy land of Colonel Austin, and settle in Texas."

The procurador then produced a pair of saddlebags, out of which he took a leathern belt stuffed with money, which he laid on the table, together with the letters. The judge opened the belt, and counted the money. It amounted to upwards of five hundred dollars in gold and silver. The procurador then read the letters.

One of the corregidores now announced that Johnny and his mulatto had left their house and fled. He, the corregidor, had sent people in pursuit of them, but as yet there were no tidings of their capture. This piece of intelligence seemed to vex the judge greatly, but he made no remark on it at the time.

"Bob Rock!" cried he.

Bob stepped forward.

"Bob Rock, or by whatever other name you may be known, are you guilty or not guilty of this man's death?"

"Guilty!" replied Bob, in a low tone.

"Gentlemen of the jury, will you be pleased to give your verdict?"

The jury left the room. In ten minutes they returned.

"Guilty!" said the foreman.

"Bob Rock," said the judge solemnly, "your fellow-citizens have found you guilty; and I pronounce the sentence—that you be hung by the neck until you are dead. The Lord be merciful to your soul!"

"Amen!" said all present.

"Thank ye," murmured Bob.

"We will seal up the property of the deceased," said the judge, "and then proceed to our painful duty."

He called for a light, and he and the procurador and corregidors sealed up the papers and money.

"Has any one aught to allege why the sentence should not be put in execution?" said the Alcalde, with a glance at me.

"He saved my life, judge and fellow-citizens!" cried I, deeply moved.

Bob shook his head mournfully.

"Let us go, then, in God's name," said the judge.

Without another word being spoken, we left the house and mounted our horses. The judge had

brought a Bible with him ; and he rode on, a little in front, with Bob, doing his best to prepare him for the eternity to which he was hastening. Bob listened attentively for some time ; but at last he seemed to get impatient, and pushed his mustang into so fast a trot, that for a moment we suspected him of wishing to escape the doom he had so eagerly sought. But it was only that he feared the fever might return before the expiration of the short time he yet had to live.

After an hour's ride, we came to the enormous live oak distinguished as the *Patriarch*. Two or three of the men dismounted, and held aside the heavy moss-covered branches, which swept the ground and formed a complete curtain round the tree. The party rode through the opening thus made, and drew up in a circle beneath the huge leafy dome. In the centre of this ring stood Bob, trembling like an aspen leaf, his eyes fixed on a small mound of fresh earth, partly concealed by the branches, and which had escaped my notice on my former visit to the tree. It was the grave of the murdered man.

A magnificent burial-place was that : no poet could have dreamed or desired a better. Above, the huge vault, with its natural frettings and arches ; below, the greenest, freshest grass ; around, an eternal half light, streaked and varied, and radiant as a rainbow. It was imposingly beautiful.

Bob, the judge, and the corregidores, remained

sitting on their horses, but several of the other men dismounted. One of the latter cut the lasso from Bob's saddle, and threw an end of it over one of the lowermost branches; then uniting the two ends, formed them into a strong noose, which he left dangling from the bough. This simple preparation completed, the Alcalde took off his hat and folded his hands. The others followed his example.

"Bob!" said the judge to the unfortunate criminal, whose head was bowed on his horse's mane; "Bob! we will pray for your poor soul, which is about to part from your sinful body."

Bob raised his head. "I had something to say," exclaimed he, in a wandering and husky tone. "Something I wanted to say."

"What have you to say?"

Bob stared around him; his lips moved, but no word escaped him. His spirit was evidently no longer with things of this earth.

"Bob!" said the judge again, "we will pray for your soul."

"Pray! pray!" groaned he. "I shall need it."

In slow and solemn accents, and with great feeling, the judge uttered the Lord's Prayer. Bob repeated every word after him. When it was ended—

"May God be merciful to his soul!" exclaimed the judge.

"Amen!" said all present.

One of the corregidores now passed the noose of the lasso round Bob's neck, another bound his eyes, a third person drew his feet out of the stirrups, whilst a fourth stepped behind his horse with a heavy riding-whip. All was done in the deepest silence; not a word was breathed, nor a foot-fall heard on the soft, yielding turf. There was something awful and oppressive in the profound stillness that reigned in the vast enclosure.

The whip fell. The horse gave a spring forwards. At the same moment Bob made a desperate clutch at the bridle, and a loud "Hold!" burst in thrilling tones from the lips of the judge.

It was too late; Bob was already hanging. The judge pushed forward, nearly riding down the man who held the whip, and, seizing Bob in his arms, raised him on his own horse, supporting him with one hand, whilst with the other he strove to unfasten the noose. His whole gigantic frame trembled with eagerness and exertion. The procurador, corregidores—all, in short, stood in open-mouthed wonder at this strange proceeding.

"Whisky! whisky! Has nobody any whisky!" shouted the judge.

One of the men sprang forward with a whisky-flask, another supported the body, and a third the feet, of the half-hanged man, whilst the judge poured a few drops of spirits into his mouth. The cravat, which had not been taken off, had hindered

the breaking of the neck. Bob at last opened his eyes, and gazed vacantly around him.

"Bob," said the judge, "you had something to say, hadn't you, about Johnny?"

"Johnny," gasped Bob, "Johnny."

"What's become of him?"

"He's gone to San Antonio, Johnny."

"To San Antonio!" repeated the judge, with an expression of great alarm overspreading his features.

"To San Antonio—to Padre José," continued Bob; "a Catholic. Beware!"

"A traitor, then!" muttered several.

"Catholic!" exclaimed the judge. The words he had heard seemed to deprive him of all strength. His arms fell slowly and gradually by his side, and Bob was again hanging from the lasso.

"A Catholic! a traitor!" repeated several of the men; "a citizen and a traitor!"

"So it is, men!" exclaimed the judge. "We've no time to lose," continued he, in a harsh, hurried voice; "no time to lose; we must catch him."

"That must we," said several, "or our plans are betrayed to the Mexicans."

"After him immediately to San Antonio!" cried the judge, with the same desperately hurried manner.

"To San Antonio!" repeated the men, pushing their way through the curtain of moss and branches. As soon as they were outside, those who were dismounted sprang into the saddle, and, without

another word, the whole party galloped away in the direction of San Antonio.

The judge alone remained, seemingly lost in thought ; his countenance pale and anxious, and his eyes following the riders. His reverie, however, had lasted but a very few seconds, when he seized my arm.

"Hasten to my house!" cried he ; "lose no time ; don't spare horse-flesh. Take Ptoly and a fresh beast ; hurry over to San Felipe, and tell Stephen Austin what has happened, and what you have seen and heard."

"But, judge——"

"Off with you at once, if you would serve and save Texas. Bring my wife and daughter back."

And so saying, he literally drove me from under the tree, pushing me out with both hands. I was so startled at the expression of violent impatience and anxiety which his features assumed, that, without venturing to make further objection, I struck the spurs into my mustang and galloped off.

Before I had got fifty yards from the tree, I looked round : the judge was nowhere to be seen.

I rode full speed to the judge's house, and thence on a fresh horse to San Felipe, where I found Colonel Austin, who seemed much alarmed by the news I brought him, had horses saddled, and sent round to all the neighbours. Before the wife and step-daughter of the judge had made their prepara-

tions to accompany me home, he and fifty armed men rode off in the direction of San Antonio.

I escorted the ladies to their house, but scarcely had we arrived there, when I was seized with fever, the result of my recent fatigues and sufferings. For some days my life was in danger, but a good constitution, and the kindest and most watchful nursing, triumphed over the disease. As soon as I was able to mount a horse, I set out for Mr Neal's plantation, in company with his huntsman Anthony, who, after spending many days, and riding over hundreds of miles of ground in quest of me, had at last found me out.

Our way led past the Patriarch ; and, as we approached it, we saw innumerable birds of prey and carrion-crows circling round it, croaking and screaming. I turned my eyes in another direction ; but, nevertheless, I felt a strange sort of longing to revisit the tree. Anthony had ridden on, and was already hidden from view behind its branches. Presently I heard him give a loud shout of exultation. I jumped off my horse, and led it through a small opening in the leafage.

Some forty paces from me, the body of a man was hanging by a lasso from the very same branch on which Bob had been hung. It was not Bob, however, for the corpse was much too short and small for him.

I drew nearer. "Johnny!" I exclaimed. "That's Johnny!"

"It *was*," answered Anthony. "Thank Heaven, there's an end of him!"

I shuddered. "But where is Bob?"

"Bob?" cried Anthony. "Bob!"

I glanced at the grave. The mound of earth seemed larger and higher than when I had last seen it. Doubtless the murderer lay beside his victim.

"Shall we not render the last service to this wretch, Anthony?" asked I.

"The scoundrel!" answered the huntsman. "I won't dirty my hands with him. Let him poison the kites and the crows!"

We rode on.

CHAPTER III.

TWENTY TO ONE.

I HAD been but three or four months in Texas, when, in consequence of the oppressive conduct of the Mexican military authorities, symptoms of discontent showed themselves, and several skirmishes occurred between the American settlers and the soldiery. The two small forts of Velasco and Nacogdoches were taken by the former, and their garrisons and a couple of field-officers made prisoners ; soon after which, however, the quarrel was made up by the intervention of Colonel Austin on the part of Texas, and Colonel Mejia on the part of the Mexican authorities.

But in the year '33 occurred Santa Anna's defection from the liberal party, and the imprisonment of Stephen F. Austin, the Texan representative in the Mexican congress, by the vice-president, Gomez Fariaa. This was followed by Texas adopting the constitution of 1824, and declaring itself an independent state of the Mexican republic. Finally, towards the close of 1835, Texas threw off the

Mexican yoke altogether, voted itself a free and sovereign republic, and prepared to defend by arms its newly asserted liberty.

The first step to be taken was, to secure our communications with the United States by getting possession of the sea-ports. General Cos had occupied Galveston harbour, and built and garrisoned a block-fort, nominally for the purpose of enforcing the customs laws, but in reality with a view to cut off our communications with New Orleans and the States. This fort it was necessary to get possession of, and my friend Fanning and myself were appointed to that duty by the Alcalde, who had taken a prominent part in all that had occurred.

Our whole force and equipment wherewith to accomplish this enterprise consisted in a sealed despatch, to be opened at the town of Columbia, and a half-breed, named Agostino, who acted as our guide. On reaching Columbia, we called together the principal inhabitants of the place, and of the neighbouring towns of Bolivar and Marion, unsealed the letter in their presence, and six hours afterwards the forces therein specified were assembled, and we were on our march towards Galveston. The next day the fort was taken, and the garrison made prisoners, without our losing a single man.

We sent off our guide to the government at San Felipe with news of our success. In nine days he returned, bringing us the thanks of congress and fresh orders. We were to leave a garrison in the

fort, and then ascend Trinity River, and march towards San Antonio de Bexar. This route was all the more agreeable to Fanning and myself, as it would bring us into the immediate vicinity of the *haciendas*, or estates, of which we had some time previously obtained a grant from the Texan government; and we did not doubt that we were indebted to our friend the Alcalde for the orders which thus conciliated our private convenience with our public duty.

As we marched along, we found the whole country in commotion, the settlers all arming, and hastening to the distant place of rendezvous. We arrived at Trinity River one afternoon, and immediately sent messengers for forty miles in all directions to summon the inhabitants. At the period in question, the plantations in that part of the country were very few and far between, but, nevertheless, by the afternoon of the next day, we had got together four-and-thirty men, mounted on mustangs, each equipped with rifle and bowie-knife, powder-horn and bullet-bag, and furnished with provisions for several days. With these we started for San Antonio de Bexar, a march of two hundred and fifty miles, through trackless prairies intersected with rivers and streams, which, although not quite so big as the Mississippi or Potomac, were yet deep and wide enough to offer serious impediment to regular armies. But to Texan farmers and backwoodsmen they were trifling obstacles. Those we

could not wade through we swam across; and in due time, and without any incident worthy of note, reached the appointed place of rendezvous, which was on the river Salado, about fifteen miles from San Antonio, the principal city of the province. This latter place it was intended to attack—an enterprise of some boldness and risk, considering that the town was protected by a strong fort, amply provided with heavy artillery, and had a garrison of nearly three thousand men, most of whose officers had distinguished themselves in the revolutionary wars against the Spaniards. Our whole army, which we found encamped on the Salado, under the command of General Austin, did not exceed eight hundred men.

The day after that on which Fanning and myself, with our four-and-thirty recruits, reached headquarters, a council of war was held, and it was resolved to advance as far as the mission of Santa Espada. The advanced guard was to push forward immediately; the main body would follow the next day. Fanning and myself were appointed to the command of the vanguard, in conjunction with Mr Wharton, a wealthy planter, who had brought a strong party of volunteers with him, and whose mature age and cool judgment, it was thought, would counterbalance any excess of youthful heat and impetuosity on our part. Selecting ninety-two men out of the eight hundred, who, to a man, volunteered to accompany us, we set out for the mission.

These missions are a sort of picket-houses or outposts of the Catholic Church, and are found in great numbers in all the frontier provinces of Spanish America, especially in Texas, Santa Fé, and Cohahuila. They are usually of sufficient strength to afford their inmates security against any predatory party of Indians or other marauders, and are occupied by priests, who, whilst using their endeavours to spread the doctrines of the Church of Rome, act also as spies and agents of the Mexican government.

On reaching Santa Espada we held a discussion as to the propriety of remaining there until the general came up, or of advancing at once towards the river. Wharton inclined to the former plan, and it was certainly the most prudent, for the mission was a strong building, surrounded by a high wall, and might have been held against very superior numbers. Fanning and I, however, did not like the idea of being cooped up in a house, and at last Wharton yielded. We left our horses and mustangs in charge of eight men, and with the remainder set out in the direction of the Salado, which flows from north to south, a third of a mile to the westward of the mission. About half-way between the latter and the river was a small group, or island, of muskeet trees, the only object that broke the uniformity of the prairie. The bank of the river on our side was tolerably steep, about eight or ten feet high, hollowed out here and there,

and covered with a thick network of wild vines. The Salado at this spot describes a sort of bow-shaped curve, with a ford at either end, by which alone the river can be passed; for although not very broad, it is rapid and deep. We resolved to take up a position within this bow, calculating that we might manage to defend the two fords, which were not above a quarter of a mile apart.

At the same time we did not lose sight of the dangers of such a position, and of the almost certainty that, if the enemy managed to cross the river, we should be surrounded and cut off. But our success on the few occasions on which we had hitherto come to blows with the Mexicans, at Velasco, Nacogdoches, and Galveston, had inspired us with so much confidence that we considered ourselves a match for thousands of such foes, and actually began to wish the enemy would attack us before our main body came up. We reconnoitred the ground, stationed a picket of twelve men at each ford, and an equal number in the island of muskeet trees, and established ourselves with the remainder amongst the vines and in the hollows on the river bank.

The commissariat department of the Texan army was, as may be supposed, not yet placed upon any very regular footing. In fact, every man was, for the present, his own commissary-general. Finding our stock of provisions very small, we sent out a party of foragers, who soon returned with three

sheep, which they had taken from a *rancho*, within a mile of San Antonio. An old priest, whom they found there, had threatened them with the anger of Heaven and of General Cos ; but they paid little attention to his denunciations, and, throwing down three dollars, walked off with the sheep. The priest was furious, got upon his mule, and trotted away in the direction of the city to complain to General Cos of the misconduct of the heretics.

After this we made no doubt that we should soon have a visit from the Dons. Nevertheless, the evening and the night passed away without incident. Day broke—still no signs of the Mexicans. This treacherous calm, we thought, might forbode a storm, and we did not allow it to lull us into security. We let the men get their breakfast, which they had hardly finished when the picket from the upper ford came in with news that a strong body of cavalry was approaching the river, and that their vanguard was already in the hollow way leading to the ford. We had scarcely received this intelligence when we heard the blare of the trumpets, and the next moment we saw the officers push their horses up the declivitous bank, closely followed by their men, whom they formed up in the prairie. We counted six small squadrons, about three hundred men in all. They were the Durango dragoons—smart troops enough to all appearance, capitally mounted and equipped, and armed with carbines and sabres.

Although the enemy had doubtless reconnoitred us from the opposite shore, and ascertained our position, he could not form any accurate idea of our numbers, for, with a view to deceive him, we kept the men in constant motion, sometimes showing a part of them on the prairie, then causing them to disappear again behind the vines and bushes. This was all very knowing for young soldiers such as we were ; but, on the other hand, we had committed a grievous error, and sinned against all established military rules, by not placing a picket on the farther side of the river, to warn us of the approach of the enemy, and the direction in which he was coming. There can be little doubt that, if we had had earlier notice of their approach, thirty or forty good marksmen—and all our people were that—might not only have delayed the advance of the Mexicans, but perhaps even totally disgusted them of their attempt to cross the Salado. The hollow way on the other side of the river, leading to the ford, was narrow and tolerably steep, and the bank at least six times as high as on our side. Nothing would have been easier than to have so stationed a party as to pick off the cavalry whilst winding through this sort of pass, and emerging two by two upon the shore. Our error, however, did not strike us till it was too late to repair it ; so we were fain to console ourselves with the reflection that the Mexicans would be much more likely to attribute our negligence to an excess of confidence

in our resources, than to inexperience in military matters, which was its real cause. We resolved to do our best to merit the good opinion which we thus supposed them to entertain of us.

When the whole of the dragoons had crossed the water, they marched on for a short distance in an easterly direction; then, wheeling to the right, proceeded southwards, until within some five hundred paces of us, where they halted. In this position, the line of cavalry formed the chord of the arc described by the river and occupied by us.

As soon as they halted, they opened their fire, although they could not see one of us, for we were completely sheltered by the bank. Our Mexican heroes, however, did not think it necessary to be within sight or range of their opponents before firing, for they gave us a rattling volley at a distance which no carbine would carry. This done, others galloped on for about a hundred yards, halted again, loaded, fired another volley, and then giving another volley, fired again. They continued this work till they found themselves within two hundred and fifty paces of us, and then appeared inclined to take a little time for reflection.

We kept ourselves perfectly still. The dragoons evidently did not like the aspect of matters. Our remaining concealed, and not replying to their fire, bothered them. We saw the officers taking a deal of pains to encourage their men, and at last two squadrons advanced, the others follow-

ing more slowly, a short distance in rear. This was the moment we had waited for. No sooner had the dragoons got into a canter, than six of our men, who had received orders to that effect, sprang up the bank, took steady aim at the officers, fired, and then jumped down again.

As we expected, the small numbers that had shown themselves encouraged the Mexicans to advance. They at first seemed taken rather aback by the fall of four of their officers; but nevertheless, after a moment's hesitation, they came thundering along full speed. They were within sixty or seventy yards of us, when Fanning and thirty of our riflemen ascended the bank, and, with a coolness and precision that would have done credit to the most veteran troops, poured a steady fire into the ranks of the dragoons.

It requires some nerve and courage for men who have never gone through any regular military training, to stand their ground, singly and unprotected, within fifty yards of an advancing line of cavalry. Our fellows did it, however, and fired, not all at once, or in a hurry, but slowly and deliberately—a running fire, every shot of which told. Saddle after saddle was emptied; the men, as they had been ordered, always picking out the foremost horsemen, and as soon as they had fired, jumping down the bank to reload. When the whole of the thirty men had discharged their rifles, Wharton and myself, with the reserve of six-and-thirty more,

took their places; but the dragoons had had almost enough already, and we had scarcely fired ten shots when they executed a right-about turn, with a uniformity and rapidity which did infinite credit to their drill, and went off at a pace that soon carried them out of reach of our bullets. They had evidently not expected so warm a reception. We saw their officers doing everything they could to check their flight, imploring, threatening, even cutting at them with their sabres, but it was all of no use; if they were to be killed, it must be in their own way, and they preferred being cut down by their officers to encountering the deadly precision of rifles, in the hands of men who, being sure of hitting a squirrel at a hundred yards, were not likely to miss a Durango dragoon at any point within range.

Our object in ordering the men to fire slowly was, always to have thirty or forty rifles loaded, wherewith to receive the enemy should he attempt a general charge. But our first greeting had been a sickener, and it appeared doubtful whether he would venture to attack us again, although the officers did everything in their power to induce their men to advance. For a long time, neither threats, entreaties, nor reproaches produced any effect. We saw the officers gesticulating furiously, pointing to us with their sabres, and impatiently spurring their horses, till the fiery animals plunged and reared, and sprang with all four feet from the

ground. It is only just to say, that the officers exhibited a degree of courage far beyond anything we had expected from them. Of the two squadrons that charged us, two-thirds of the officers had fallen; but those who remained, instead of appearing intimidated by their comrades' fate, redoubled their efforts to bring their men forward.

At last there appeared some probability of their accomplishing this, after a curious and truly Mexican fashion. Posting themselves in front of their squadrons, they rode on alone for a hundred yards or so, halted, looked round, as much as to say, "You see there is no danger as far as this," and then, galloping back, led their men on. Each time that they executed this manœuvre, the dragoons would advance slowly some thirty or forty paces, and then halt as simultaneously as if the word of command had been given. Off went the officers again some distance to the front, and then back again to their men, and got them on a little farther. In this manner these heroes were inveigled once more to within a hundred and fifty yards of our position.

Of course, at each of the numerous halts which they made during their advance, they favoured us with a general but most innocuous discharge of their carbines; and at last, gaining confidence, I suppose, from our passiveness, and from the noise and smoke they themselves had made, three squadrons, which had not yet been under fire,

formed open column and advanced at a trot. Without giving them time to halt or reflect—"Forward! Charge!" shouted the officers, urging their own horses to their utmost speed; and following the impulse thus given, the three squadrons came charging furiously along.

Up sprang thirty of our men to receive them. Their orders were to fire slowly, and not throw away a shot, but the gleaming sabres and rapid approach of the dragoons flurried some of them, and, firing a hasty volley, they jumped down the bank again. This precipitation had nearly been fatal to us. Several of the dragoons fell, and there was some confusion and a momentary faltering amongst the others; but they still came on. At this critical moment, Wharton and myself, with the reserve, showed ourselves on the bank. "Slow and sure—mark your men!" shouted we both, Wharton on the right and I on the left. The command was obeyed; rifle after rifle cracked off, always aimed at the foremost of the dragoons, and at every report a saddle was emptied. Before we had all fired, Fanning and a dozen of his smartest men had again loaded, and were by our side. For nearly a minute the Mexicans paused, as if stupified by our murderous fire, and uncertain whether to advance or retire; but as those who attempted the former were invariably shot down, they at last began a retreat, which was soon converted into a rout. We gave them a farewell

volley, which eased a few more horses of their riders, and then got under cover again, to await what might next occur.

But the Mexican caballeros had no notion of coming up to the scratch a third time. They kept patrolling about some three or four hundred yards off, and firing volleys at us, which they were able to do with perfect impunity, as at that distance we did not think proper to return a shot.

The skirmish had lasted nearly three quarters of an hour. Strange to say, we had not had a single man wounded, although at times the bullets had fallen about us as thick as hail. We could not account for this. Many of us had been hit by the balls, but a bruise or a graze of the skin were the worst consequences. We were in a fair way to deem ourselves invulnerable.

We began to think the fight over for the day, when our vedettes at the lower ford brought us the somewhat unpleasant intelligence that large masses of infantry were approaching the river, and would soon be in sight. The words were hardly uttered, when the roll of drums and shrill squeak of the fife were audible, and in a few minutes the head of the column of infantry, having crossed the ford, ascended the sloping bank, and defiled in the prairie opposite the island of muskeet trees. As company after company appeared, we were able to form a pretty exact estimate of their numbers. There were two battalions, together about a thou-

sand men ; and they brought a field-piece with them.

These were certainly rather long odds to be opposed to seventy-two men and three officers ; for it must be remembered that we had left eight of our people at the mission, and twelve in the island of trees. Two battalions of infantry, and six squadrons of dragoons—the latter, to be sure, disheartened and diminished by the loss of some fifty men, but nevertheless formidable opponents, now that they were supported by the foot soldiers. About twenty Mexicans to each of us. It was getting past a joke. We were all capital shots, and most of us, besides our rifles, had a brace of pistols in our belts ; but what were seventy-five rifles, and five or six score pistols, against a thousand muskets and bayonets, two hundred and fifty dragoons, and a field-piece loaded with canister ? If the Mexicans had a spark of courage or soldiership about them, our fate was sealed. But it was exactly this courage and soldiership which we made sure would be wanting.

Nevertheless we, the officers, could not repress a feeling of anxiety and self-reproach, when we reflected that we had brought our comrades into such a hazardous predicament. But on looking around us, our apprehensions vanished. Nothing could exceed the perfect coolness and confidence with which the men were cleaning and preparing their rifles for the approaching conflict ; no bravado

—no boasting, talking, or laughing, but a calm decision of manner, which at once told us that, if it were possible to overcome such odds as were brought against us, those were the men to do it.

Our arrangements for the approaching struggle were soon completed. Fanning and Wharton were to make head against the infantry and cavalry. I was to capture the field-piece—an eight-pounder.

This gun was placed by the Mexicans upon their extreme left, close to the river, the shores of which it commanded for a considerable distance. The bank along which we were posted was, as before mentioned, indented by caves and hollows, and covered with a thick tapestry of vines and other plants, very useful in concealing us from the artillerymen. The latter made a pretty good guess at our position, however, and at the first discharge the canister whizzed past us at a very short distance. There was not a moment to lose, for one well-directed shot might exterminate half of us. Followed by a dozen men, I worked my way as well as I could through the labyrinth of vines and bushes, and was not more than fifty yards from the gun, when it was again fired. No one was hurt, although the shot was evidently intended for my party. The enemy could not see us; but the motion of the vines, as we passed through them, had betrayed our whereabouts: so, perceiving we were discovered, I sprang up the

bank into the prairie, followed by my men, to whom I shouted to be sure and aim at the artillerymen.

I had raised my own rifle to my shoulder, when I let it fall again in astonishment at an apparition that presented itself to my view. This was a tall, lean, wild figure, with a face overgrown by a long beard that hung down upon his breast, and dressed in a leather cap, jacket, and mocassins. Where this man had sprung from was a perfect riddle. He was unknown to any of us, although I had some vague recollection of having seen him before, but where or when I could not recall to mind. He had a long rifle in his hands, which he must have fired once already, for one of the artillerymen lay dead by the gun. At the moment I first caught sight of him, he shot down another, and then began reloading, with a rapid dexterity that proved him well used to the thing. My men were as much astonished as I was by this strange apparition, which appeared to have started out of the earth; and for a few seconds they forgot to fire, and stood gazing at the stranger. The latter evidently disapproved their inaction.

"D—— yer eyes, ye starin' fools!" shouted he in a rough, hoarse voice, "don't ye see them artillerymen? Why don't ye knock 'em on the head?"

It certainly was not the moment to remain idle. We fired; but our astonishment had thrown

us off our balance, and we nearly all missed. We sprang down the bank again to load, just as the men serving the gun were slewing it round, so as to bring it to bear upon us. Before this was accomplished, we were under cover, and the stranger had the benefit of the discharge, of which he took no more notice than if he had borne a charmed life. Again we heard the crack of his rifle, and when, having reloaded, we once more ascended the bank, he was taking aim at the last artilleryman, who fell, as his companions had done.

"D—— ye, for laggin' fellers!" growled the stranger. "Why don't you take that 'ere big gun?"

The smallness of our numbers, the bad direction of our first volley, but, above all, the precipitation with which we had jumped down the bank after firing it, had so encouraged the enemy, that a company of infantry, drawn up some distance in rear of the field-piece, fired a volley, and advanced at double-quick time, part of them making a small circuit with the intention of cutting us off from our friends. At this moment we saw Fanning and thirty men coming along the river bank to our assistance; so without minding the Mexicans, who were getting behind us, we rushed forward to within twenty paces of those in our front, and taking steady aim, brought down every man his bird. The sort of desperate coolness with which this was done, produced the greater effect on our

opponents, as being something quite out of their way. They would, perhaps, have stood firm against a volley from five times our number, at a rather greater distance; but they did not like having their mustaches singed by our powder; and after a moment's wavering and hesitation, they shouted out "Diablos! Diablos!" and throwing away their muskets, broke into a precipitate flight.

Fanning and Wharton now came up with all the men. Under cover of the infantry's advance, the gun had been re-manned, but, luckily for us, only by infantry soldiers; for had there been artillerymen to seize the moment when we were all standing exposed on the prairie, they might have diminished our numbers not a little. The fuse was already burning, and we had just time to get under the bank when the gun went off. Up we jumped again, and looked about us to see what was next to be done.

Although hitherto all the advantage had been on our side, our situation was still a very perilous one. The company we had put to flight had rejoined its battalion, which now advanced by echelon of companies. The second battalion, which was rather farther from us, moved forward in like manner, and in a parallel direction. We should probably, therefore, have to resist the attack of a dozen companies, one after the other; and it was to be feared that the Mexicans would at last get

over their panic-terror of our rifles, and exchange their distant and ineffectual platoon-firing for a charge with the bayonet, in which their superior numbers would tell. We observed, also, that the cavalry, which had kept at a safe distance, was now put in motion, and formed up close to the island of muskeet trees, to which the right flank of the infantry was also extending itself. Thence they had clear ground for a charge down upon us.

Meanwhile, what had become of the twelve men whom we had left in the island? Were they still there, or had they fallen back upon the mission in dismay at the overwhelming force of the Mexicans? If the latter, it was a bad business for us, for they were all capital shots, and well armed with rifles and pistols. We heartily wished we had brought them with us, as well as the eight men at the mission. Cut off from us as they were, what could they do against the whole of the cavalry, and two companies of infantry now approaching the island? To add to our difficulties, ammunition began to run short. Many of us had had only enough powder and ball for fifteen or sixteen charges, which were now reduced to six or seven. It was no use desponding, however; and, after a hurried consultation, it was agreed that Fanning and Wharton should open a fire upon the enemy's centre, whilst I made a dash at the field-piece before more infantry had time to come up for its protection.

The infantry-men who had remanned the gun were by this time shot down, and, as none had come to replace them, it was served by an officer alone. Just as I gave the order to advance to the twenty men who were to follow me, this officer fell. Simultaneously with his fall, I heard a sort of yell behind me, and, turning round, saw that it proceeded from the wild spectre-looking stranger, whom I had lost sight of during the last few minutes. A ball had struck him, and he fell heavily to the ground, his rifle—which had just been discharged, and still smoked from muzzle and touchhole—clutched convulsively in both hands; his features distorted; his eyes rolling frightfully. There was something in the expression of his face at that moment which brought back to me, in vivid colours, one of the earliest and most striking incidents of my residence in Texas. Had I not myself seen him hung, I could have sworn that *Bob Rock, the murderer*, now lay before me.

A second look at the man gave additional force to this idea.

"Bob!" I exclaimed.

"Bob!" repeated the wounded man in a broken voice, and with a look of astonishment, almost of dismay. "Who calls Bob?"

A wild gleam shot from his eyes, which the next instant closed. His senses had left him.

It was neither the time nor the place to indulge

in speculations on this singular resurrection of a man whose execution I had myself witnessed. With twelve hundred foes around us, we had plenty to occupy all our thoughts and attention. My people were already masters of the gun, and some of them drew it forwards and pointed it against the enemy, whilst the others spread out right and left to protect it with their rifles. I was busy loading the piece when an exclamation of surprise from one of the men made me look up.

There seemed to be something extraordinary happening amongst the Mexicans, to judge from the degree of confusion which suddenly showed itself in their ranks, and which, beginning with the cavalry and right flank of the infantry, soon became general throughout their whole force. It was a sort of wavering and unsteadiness which, to us, was quite unaccountable, for Fanning and Wharton had not yet fired twenty shots, and, indeed, had only just come within range of the enemy. Not knowing what it could portend, I called in my men, and stationed them round the gun, which I double-shotted, and stood ready to fire.

The confusion in the Mexican ranks increased. For about a minute they waved and reeled to and fro, as if uncertain which way to go; and at last the cavalry and right of the line fairly broke, and ran for it. This example was followed by the centre, and presently the whole of the two batta-

lions and three hundred cavalry were scattered over the prairie in the wildest and most disorderly flight. I gave them a parting salute from the eight-pounder, which would doubtless have accelerated their movements had it been possible to run faster than they were already doing.

We stood staring after the fugitives in bewilderment, totally unable to explain their apparently causeless panic. At last the report of several rifles from the island of trees gave us a clue to the mystery.

The infantry, whose left flank extended to the Salado, had pushed their right into the prairie as far as the island of muskeet trees, in order to connect their line with the dragoons, and then, by a general advance, to attack us on all sides at once, and get the full advantage of their superior numbers. The plan was not a bad one. Infantry and cavalry approached the island, quite unsuspecting of its concealing an enemy. The twelve riflemen whom we had stationed there remained perfectly quiet, concealed behind the trees; allowed squadrons and companies to come within twenty paces of them, and then opened their fire, first from their pistols, then from their rifles.

Some six-and-thirty shots, every one of which told, fired suddenly from a cover close to their rear, were enough to startle even the best troops, much more so our Mexican Dons, who, already sufficiently inclined to a panic, now believed themselves fallen

into an ambuscade, and surrounded on all sides by the incarnate *diablos*, as they called us. The cavalry, who had not yet recovered the thrashing we had given them, were ready enough for a run, and the infantry were not slow to follow.

Our first impulse was naturally to pursue the flying enemy, but a discovery made by some of the men induced us to abandon that idea. They had opened the pouches of the dead Mexicans in order to supply themselves with ammunition, ours being nearly expended; but the powder of the cartridges turned out so bad as to be useless. It was little better than charcoal-dust, and would not carry a ball fifty paces to kill or wound. This accounted for our apparent invulnerability to the fire of the Mexicans. The muskets also were of a very inferior description. Both they and the cartridges were of English make; the former being stamped Birmingham, and the latter having the name of an English powder-manufactory, with the significant addition, "for exportation."

Under these circumstances, we had nothing to do but to let the Mexicans run. We sent a detachment to the muskeet island to reinforce the twelve men who had done such good service there, and thence to advance towards the ford. We ourselves proceeded slowly in the latter direction. This demonstration brought the fugitives back again, for most of them, in the wild precipitation of their flight, had passed the only place where they

could traverse the river, across which they now crowded in the greatest confusion, foot and horse all mixed up together; and by the time we got within a hundred paces of the ford, the prairie was nearly clear of them. There were still a couple of hundred men on our side the water, completely at our mercy, and Wharton, who was a little in front with thirty men, gave the word to fire upon them. No one obeyed. He repeated the command. Not a rifle was raised. He stared at his men, astonished and impatient at this strange disobedience. An old weather-beaten bear-hunter stepped forward, squirting out his tobacco juice with all imaginable deliberation.

"I tell ye what, capting!" said he, passing his quid over from his right cheek to his left; "I calkilate, capting," he continued, "we'd better leave the poor devils of Dons alone."

"The poor devils of Dons alone!" repeated Wharton in a rage. "Are you mad, man?"

Fanning and I had just come up with our detachment, and were not less surprised and angry than Wharton at this breach of discipline. The man, however, did not suffer himself to be disconcerted.

"There's a proverb, gentlemen," said he, turning to us, "which says, that one should build a golden bridge for a beaten enemy; and a good proverb it is, I calkilate—a considerable good one."

"What do you mean, man, with your golden

bridge?" cried Fanning—"this is no time for proverbs."

"Do you know that you are liable to be punished for insubordination?" said I. "It's your duty to fire, and do the enemy all the harm you can—not to be quoting proverbs."

"Calkilate it is," replied the man very coolly. "Calkilate I could shoot 'em without either danger or trouble; but I reckon that would be like Spaniards or Mexicans; not like Americans—not prudent."

"Not like Americans? Would you let the enemy escape, then, when we have him in our power?"

"Calkilate I would. Calkilate we should do ourselves more harm than him by shootin' down his people. That was a considerable sensible commandment of yourn, always to shoot the foremost of the Mexicans when they attacked. It discouraged the bold ones, and was kinder premium on cowardice. Them as lagged behind escaped, them as came bravely on were shot. It was a good calkilation. If we had shot 'em without discrimination, the cowards would have got bold, seein' that they weren't safer in rear than in front. The cowards are our best friends. Now them run-aways," continued he, pointing to the Mexicans, who were crowding over the river, "are jest the most cowardly of 'em all, for in their fright they quite forgot the ford, and it's because they ran so

far beyond it that they are last to cross the water. And if you fire at 'em now, they'll find that they get nothin' by bein' cowards; and next time, I reckon, they'll sell their hides as dear as they can."

Untimely as this palaver, to use a popular word, undoubtedly was, we could scarcely forbear smiling at the simple, artless manner in which the old Yankee spoke his mind.

"Calkilate, captings," he concluded, "you'd better let the poor devils run. We shall get more profit by it than if we shot five hundred of 'em. Next time they'll run away directly, to show their gratitude for our ginerosity."

The man stepped back into the ranks, and his comrades nodded approvingly, and calculated and reckoned that Zebediah had spoke a true word; and meanwhile the enemy had crossed the river, and was out of our reach. We were forced to content ourselves with sending a party across the water to follow up the Mexicans, and observe the direction they took. We then returned to our old position.

My first thought on arriving there was to search for the body of Bob Rock—for he it undoubtedly was who had so mysteriously appeared amongst us. I repaired to the spot where I had seen him fall, but could find no trace of him, either dead or alive. I went over the whole scene of the fight, searched amongst the vines and along the bank of the river; there were plenty of dead Mexicans—

cavalry, infantry, and artillery—but no Bob was to be found, nor could any one inform me what had become of him, although several had seen him fall.

I was continuing my search, when I met Wharton, who asked me what I was seeking, and on learning, shook his head gravely. He had seen the wild prairieman, he said, but whence he came, or whither he was gone, was more than he could tell. It was a long time since anything had startled and astonished him so much as this man's appearance and proceedings. He (Wharton) was stationed with his party amongst the vines, about fifty paces in rear of Fanning's people, when, just as the Mexican infantry had crossed the ford, and were forming up, he saw a man approaching at a brisk trot from the north side of the prairie. He halted about a couple of hundred yards from Wharton, tied his mustang to a bush, and, with his rifle on his arm, strode along the edge of the prairie in the direction of the Mexicans. When he passed near Wharton, the latter called out to him to halt, and say who he was, whence he came, and whither going.

"Who I am is no business of yourn," replied the man; "nor where I come from neither. You'll soon see where I'm goin'. I'm goin' agin' the enemy."

"Then you must come and join us," cried Wharton.

This the stranger testily refused to do. He'd fight on his own hook, he said.

Wharton told him he must not do that.

He should like to see who'd hinder him, he said, and walked on. The next moment he shot the first artilleryman. After that they let him take his own way.

Neither Wharton, nor any of his men, knew what had become of him; but at last I met with a bear-hunter, who gave me the following information.

"Calkilatin'," said he, "that the wild prairie-man's rifle was a capital good one—as good a one as ever killed a bear—he tho't it a pity that it should fall into bad hands, so went to secure it himself, although the frontispiece of its dead owner warn't very invitin'. But when he stooped to take the gun, he got such a shove as knocked him backwards; and on getting up, he saw the prairieman openin' his jacket and examinin' a wound on his breast, which was neither deep nor dangerous, although it had taken away the man's senses for a while. The ball had struck the breast bone, and was quite near the skin, so that the wounded man pushed it out with his fingers; and then, supporting himself on his rifle, got up from the ground, and without either a thankye, or a d—nye, walked to where his mustang was tied up, got on its back, and rode slowly away in a northerly direction."

This was all the information I could obtain on

the subject, and shortly afterwards the main body of our army came up, and I had other matters to occupy my attention. General Austin expressed his gratitude and approbation to our brave fellows, after a truly republican and democratic fashion. He shook hands with all the rough bear and buffalo hunters, and drank with them. Fanning and myself he promoted on the spot to the rank of colonel.

We were giving the general a detailed account of the morning's events, when a Mexican priest appeared with a flag of truce and several waggons, and craved permission to take away the dead. This was of course granted, and we had some talk with the padre, who, however, was too wily a customer to allow himself to be pumped. What little we did get out of him determined us to advance the same afternoon against San Antonio. We thought there was some chance that, in the present panic-struck state of the Mexicans, we might obtain possession of the place by a bold and sudden assault.

In this, however, we were mistaken. We found the gates closed, and the enemy on his guard, but too dispirited to oppose our taking up a position at about cannon-shot from the great redoubt. We had soon invested all the outlets from the city.

San Antonio de Bexar lies in a fertile and well-irrigated valley, stretching westward from the river Salado. In the centre of the town rises the

fort of the Alamo, which at that time was armed with forty-eight pieces of artillery of various calibre. The garrison of the town and fortress was nearly three thousand strong.

Our artillery consisted of two batteries of four six-pounders and five eight-pounders; our army of eleven hundred men, with which we had not only to carry on the siege, but also to make head against the forces that would be sent against us from Cohahuila, on the frontier of which province General Cos was stationed, with a strong body of troops.

We were not discouraged, however, and opened our fire upon the city. During the first week, not a day passed without smart skirmishes. General Cos's dragoons swarmed about us like so many Bedouins. But although well mounted, and capital horsemen, they were no match for our backwoodsmen. Those from the western states, especially, accustomed to Indian warfare and cunning, laid traps and ambuscades for the Mexicans, and were constantly destroying their detachments. As for the besieged, if one of them showed his head for ten seconds above the city wall, he was sure of getting a rifle bullet through it. I cannot say that our besieging army was a perfect model of military discipline; but any deficiencies in that respect were made good by the intelligence of the men, and the zeal and unanimity with which they pursued the accomplishment of one great object—

the capture of the city—the liberty and independence of Texas.

The badness of the gunpowder used by the Mexicans was again of great service to us. Many of their cannon-balls that fell far short of us were collected, and returned to them with powerful effect. We kept a sharp look-out for convoys, and captured no less than three—one of horses, another of provisions, and twenty thousand dollars in money.

After an eight weeks' siege, a breach having been made, the city surrendered, and a month later the fort followed the example. With a powerful park of artillery we then advanced upon Goliad, the strongest fortress in Texas, which likewise capitulated in about four weeks' time. We were now masters of the whole country, and the war was apparently at an end.

But the Mexicans were not the people to give up their best province so easily. They have too much of the old Spanish character about them—that determined obstinacy which sustained the Spaniards during their protracted struggle against the Moors. The honour of their republic was compromised, and that must be redeemed. Thundering proclamations were issued, denouncing the Texans as rebels, who should be swept off the face of the earth, and threatening the United States for having aided us with money and volunteers. Ten thousand of the best troops in Mexico entered

Texas, and were shortly to be followed by ten thousand more. The President, General Santa Anna, himself came to take the command, attended by a numerous and brilliant staff.

The Texans laughed at the fanfaronades of the Dons, and did not attach sufficient importance to these formidable preparations. Their good opinion of themselves, and contempt of their foes, had been increased to an unreasonable degree by their recent and rapid successes. They forgot that the troops to which they had hitherto been opposed were for the most part militia, and that those now advancing against them were of a far better description, and had probably better powder. The call to arms made by our president, Burnet, was disregarded by many, and we could only get together about two thousand men, of whom nearly two-thirds had to be left to garrison the forts of Goliad and Alamo. In the first-named place we left seven hundred and sixty men, under the command of Fanning; in the latter, something more than five hundred. With the remaining seven or eight hundred we took the field.

The Mexicans advanced so rapidly that they were upon us before we were aware of it, and we were compelled to retreat, leaving the garrisons of the two forts to their fate, and a right melancholy one it proved.

One morning news was brought to Goliad that a number of country people, principally women

and children, were on their way to the fort, closely pursued by the Mexicans. Fanning, losing sight of prudence in his compassion for these poor people, immediately ordered a battalion of five hundred men, under the command of Major Ward, to go and meet the fugitives, and escort them in. The major and several officers of the garrison doubted as to the propriety of this measure ; but Fanning, full of sympathy for his unprotected countrywomen, insisted, and the battalion moved out. They soon came in sight of the fugitives, as they thought, but on drawing nearer, the latter turned out to be Mexican dragoons, who sprang upon their horses, which were concealed in the neighbouring islands of trees, and a desperate fight began. The Mexicans, far superior in numbers, received every moment accessions to their strength. The Louis-Potosi and Santa Fé cavalry, fellows who seem born on horseback, were there. Our unfortunate countrymen were hemmed in on all sides. The fight lasted two days, and only two men out of the five hundred escaped with their lives.

Before the news of this misfortune reached us, orders had been sent to Fanning to evacuate the fort and join us with six pieces of artillery. He received the order, and proceeded to execute it. But what might have been very practicable for eight hundred and sixty men, was impossible for three hundred and sixty. Nevertheless, Fanning began his march through the prairie. His little

band was almost immediately surrounded by the enemy. After a gallant defence, which lasted twelve hours, they succeeded in reaching an island; but scarcely had they established themselves there, when they found that their ammunition was expended. There was nothing left for them but to accept the terms offered by the Mexicans, who pledged themselves that, if they laid down their arms, they should be permitted to return to their homes. But the rifles were no sooner piled than the Texans found themselves charged by their treacherous foes, who butchered them without mercy. Only an advanced post of three men succeeded in escaping.

The five hundred men whom we had left in San Antonio de Bexar fared no better. Not sufficiently numerous to hold out the town as well as the Alamo, they retreated into the latter. The Mexican artillery soon laid a part of the fort in ruins. Still its defenders held out. After eight days' fighting, during which the loss of the besiegers was tremendously severe, the Alamo was taken, and not a single Texan left alive.

We thus, by these two cruel blows, lost two-thirds of our army, and little more than seven hundred men remained to resist the numerous legions of our victorious foe. The prospect before us was one well calculated to daunt the stoutest heart.

The Mexican general, Santa Anna, moved his

army forward in two divisions, one stretching along the coast towards Velasco, the other advancing towards San Felipe de Austin. He himself, with a small force, marched in the centre. At Fort Bend, twenty miles below San Felipe, he crossed the Brazos, and shortly afterwards established himself with about fifteen hundred men in an intrenched camp. Our army, under the command of General Houston, was in front of Harrisburg, to which place the congress had retreated.

It was on the night of the 20th of April, and our whole disposable force, some seven hundred men, was bivouacked in and about an island of sycamores. It was a cloudy, stormy evening; a high wind blew, and the branches of the trees groaned and creaked above our heads. The weather harmonised well enough with our feelings, which were sad and desponding when we thought of the desperate state of our cause. We (the officers) were seated in a circle round the general and Alcalde, both of whom appeared uneasy and anxious. More than once they got up, and walked backwards and forwards, seemingly impatient, and as if they waited for or expected something. There was a deep silence throughout the whole bivouac; some slept, and those who watched were in no humour for idle chat.

"Who goes there?" suddenly shouted a sentry. The answer we did not hear, but it was apparently satisfactory, for there was no further challenge, and

a few seconds afterwards an orderly came up, and whispered something in the ear of the Alcalde. The latter hurried away, and, presently returning, spoke a few words in a low tone to the general, and then to us officers. In an instant we were all upon our feet. In less than ten minutes the bivouac was broken up, and our little army on the march.

All our people were well mounted, and armed with rifles, pistols, and bowie-knives. We had six field-pieces, but we only took four, harnessed with twice the usual number of horses. We marched at a rapid trot the whole night, led by a tall, gaunt figure of a man who acted as our guide, and kept some distance in front. I more than once asked the Alcalde who this was. "You will know by and by," was his answer.

Before daybreak we had ridden five-and-twenty miles, but had been compelled to abandon two more guns. As yet, no one knew the object of this forced march. The general commanded a halt, and ordered the men to refresh and strengthen themselves by food and drink. Whilst they did this, he assembled the officers around him, and the meaning of our night-march was explained to us. The camp in which the Mexican president and general-in-chief had intrenched himself was within a mile of us; General Parza, with two thousand men, was twenty miles farther to the rear; General Filasola, with one thousand, eighteen miles lower down on the Brazos; Visca, with

fifteen hundred, twenty-five miles higher up. One bold, decided blow, and Texas might yet be free. There was not a moment to lose, nor was one lost. The general addressed the men.

"Friends! Brothers! Citizens! General Santa Anna is within a mile of us with fifteen hundred men. The hour that is to decide the question of Texan liberty, is now arrived. What say you? Do we attack?"

"We do!" exclaimed the men with one voice, cheerfully and decidedly.

In the most perfect stillness we arrived within two hundred paces of the enemy's camp. The reveille of the sleeping Mexicans was the discharge of our two field-pieces loaded with canister. Rushing on to within twenty-five paces of the intrenchment, we gave them a deadly volley from our rifles, and then, throwing away the latter, bounded up the breastworks, a pistol in each hand. The Mexicans, scared and stupefied by this sudden attack, ran to and fro in the wildest confusion, seeking their arms, and not knowing which way to turn. After firing our pistols, we threw them away as we had done our rifles, and, drawing our bowie-knives, fell, with a shout, upon the masses of the terrified foe. It was more like the boarding of a ship than any land fight I had ever seen or imagined.

My station was on the right of the line, where the breastwork, ending in a redoubt, was steep

and high. I made two attempts to climb up, but both times slipped back. On the third trial I nearly gained the summit; but was again slipping down, when a hand seized me by the collar, and pulled me up on the bank. In the darkness and confusion I did not distinguish the face of the man who rendered me this assistance. I only saw the glitter of a bayonet which a Mexican thrust into his shoulder, at the very moment he helped me up. He neither flinched nor let go his hold of me till I was fairly on my feet; then, turning slowly round, he levelled a pistol at the soldier, who, at that very moment, was struck down by the Alcalde.

"No thanks to ye, squire!" exclaimed the man, in a voice which made me start, even in that moment of excitement and bustle. I looked at the speaker, but could only see his back, for he had already plunged into the thick of the fight, and was engaged with a party of Mexicans, who defended themselves desperately. He fought like a man as anxious to be killed as to kill, striking furiously right and left, but never guarding a blow, though the Alcalde, who was by his side, warded off several which were aimed at him.

By this time my men had scrambled up after me. I looked round to see where our help was most wanted, and was about to lead them forward, when I heard the voice of the Alcalde.

"Are you badly hurt, Bob?" said he, in an anxious tone.

I glanced at the spot whence the voice came. There lay Bob Rock, covered with blood, and apparently insensible. The Alcalde was supporting his head on his arm. Before I had time to give a second look, I was hurried forward with the rest towards the centre of the camp, where the fight was at the hottest.

About five hundred men, the pick of the Mexican army, had collected round a knot of staff-officers, and were making a most gallant defence. General Houston had attacked them with three hundred of our people, but had not been able to break their ranks. His charge, however, had shaken them a little, and, before they had time to recover from it, I came up. With a wild hurrah, my men fired their pistols, hurled them at their enemies' heads, and then, springing over the corpses of the fallen, dashed like a thunderbolt into the broken ranks of the Mexicans.

A frightful butchery ensued. Our men, who were for the most part, and at most times, peaceable and humane in disposition, were converted into perfect fiends. Whole ranks of the enemy fell under their knives. Some idea may be formed of the horrible slaughter, from the fact that the fight, from beginning to end, did not last above ten minutes, and in that time nearly eight hundred Mexicans were shot or cut down. "No quarter!" was the cry of the infuriated assailants: "Remember Alamo! Remember Goliad! Think of Fan-

ning, Ward!" The Mexicans threw themselves on their knees, imploring mercy. "*Misericordia! Cuartel, por el amor de Dios!*" shrieked they in heart-rending tones; but their supplications were not listened to, and every man of them would inevitably have been butchered, had not General Houston and the officers dashed in between the victors and the vanquished, and with the greatest difficulty, and by threats of cutting down our own men if they did not desist, put an end to this scene of bloodshed, and saved the Texan character from the stain of unmanly cruelty.

When all was over, I hurried back to the place where I had left the Alcalde with Bob, who lay, bleeding from six wounds, only a few paces from the spot where he had helped me up the breastwork. The bodies of two dead Mexicans served him for a pillow. The Alcalde was kneeling by his side, gazing sadly and earnestly into the face of the dying man.

For Bob was dying; but it was no longer the death of the despairing murderer. The expression of his features was calm and composed, and his eyes were raised to heaven with a look of hope and supplication.

I stooped down and asked him how he felt himself, but he made no answer, and evidently did not remember me. After a minute or two,

"How goes it with the fight?" he asked in a broken voice.

"We have conquered, Bob. The enemy killed or taken. Not a man escaped."

He paused a little, and then spoke again.

"Have I done my duty? May I hope to be forgiven?"

The Alcalde answered him in an agitated voice.

"He who forgave the sinner on the cross will doubtless be merciful to you, Bob. His holy book says: 'There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just men.' Be of good hope, Bob! the Almighty will surely be merciful to you!"

"Thank ye, squire," gasped Bob, "you're a true friend, a friend in life and in death. Well, it's come at last," said he, a resigned and happy smile stealing over his features. "I've prayed for it long enough. Thank God, it's come at last!"

He gazed up at the Alcalde with a kindly expression of countenance. There was a slight shuddering movement of his whole frame—Bob was dead.

The Alcalde remained kneeling for a short time by the side of the corpse, his lips moving in prayer. At last he rose to his feet.

"God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live," said he, in a low and solemn tone. "I had those words in my thoughts four years ago, when I cut him down from the branch of the Patriarch."

"Four years ago!" cried I. "Then *you* cut

him down, and were in time to save him! Was it he who yesterday brought us news of the vicinity of the foe?"

"It was, and much more than that has he done," replied the Alcalde, no longer striving to conceal the tears that fell from his eyes. "For four years has he dragged on his wretched existence, weary of the world, and despised of all men. For four years has he served us, lived, fought, and spied for us, without honour, reward, hope, or consolation — without a single hour of tranquillity, or a wish for aught except death. All this to serve Texas and his countrymen. Who shall say this man was not a true patriot?"

"God will surely be merciful to his soul," said the Alcalde, after a pause.

"I trust he will," answered I, profoundly affected.

We were interrupted at this moment by a message from General Houston, to whom we immediately hastened. All was uproar and confusion. Santa Anna could not be found amongst the prisoners.

This was a terrible disappointment, for the capture of the Mexican president had been our principal object, and the victory we had gained was comparatively unimportant if he escaped. Indeed, the hope of putting an end to the war by his capture had more than anything encouraged and stimulated us to the unequal conflict.

The moment was a very critical one. Amongst

our men were some thirty or forty desperate characters, who began handling their knives, and casting looks upon the prisoners, the meaning of which it was impossible to mistake. Selecting some of our trustiest men, we stationed them as a guard over the captives, and, having thus assured the safety of the latter, questioned them as to what had become of their general.

They had none of them seen Santa Anna since the commencement of the fight, and it was clear that he must have made his escape whilst we were getting over the breastworks. He could not be very far off, and we at once took measures to find him. A hundred men were sent off with the prisoners to Harrisburg, and a hundred others, capitally mounted on horses found in the Mexican camp, started to scour the country in search of the fugitive chief. I accompanied the latter detachment.

We had been twelve hours in the saddle, and had ridden over nearly a hundred miles of ground. We almost despaired of finding the game we were in quest of, and thought of abandoning the chase, when, at a distance of about seven miles from the camp, one of our most experienced hunters discovered the print of a small and delicate boot upon some soft ground leading to a marsh. Following this trail, it at last led us to a man sunk up to his waist in the swamp, and so covered with mud and filth as to be quite unrecognisable. We

drew him from his hiding-place, half dead with cold and terror, and, having washed the dirt from his face, we found him to be a man of about forty years of age, with blue eyes, of a mild but crafty expression ; a narrow, high forehead ; long, thin nose, rather fleshy at the tip ; projecting upper lip, and long chin. These features tallied too exactly with the description we had had of the Mexican president for us to doubt that our prisoner was Santa Anna himself.

The only thing that at all tended to shake this conviction was the extraordinary poltroonery of our new captive. He threw himself on his knees, begging us, in the name of God and all the saints, to spare his life. Our reiterated assurances and promises were insufficient to convince him of his perfect safety, or to induce him to adopt a demeanour more consistent with his dignity and high station.

The events which succeeded this fortunate capture are too well known to require more than a very brief recapitulation. The same evening, a truce was agreed upon between Houston and Santa Anna, the latter sending orders to his different generals to retire upon San Antonio de Bexar, and other places in the direction of the Mexican frontier. These orders, valueless as emanating from a prisoner, most of the generals were weak or cowardly enough to obey—an obedience for which they were afterwards brought to trial by the Mexican

congress. In a few days, two-thirds of Texas were in our possession.

The news of these successes brought crowds of volunteers to our standard. In three weeks we had an army of several thousand men, with which we advanced against the Mexicans. There was no more fighting, however, for our antagonists had had enough, and allowed themselves to be driven from one position to another, till, in a month's time, there was not one of them left in the country.

The struggle was over, and Texas was Free !

TWO NIGHTS IN SOUTHERN MEXICO

TWO NIGHTS IN SOUTHERN MEXICO.

"A CAPITAL place this for our bivouac!" cried I, swinging myself off my mule, and stretching my arms and legs, stiffened by a long ride.

We had halted in a snug ravine, well shaded by mahogany-trees; the ground was covered with the luxuriant vegetation of that tropical region, a little stream bubbled and leaped and dashed down one of the high rocks that flanked the hollow, and rippled away through the tall fern towards the rear of our halting-place, at the distance of a hundred yards from which the ground was low and shelving.

"A capital place this for our bivouac!"

My companion nodded. As to the lazy Mexican *arrieros* and servants, they said nothing, but began making arrangements for passing the night. Curse the fellows! Had they seen us preparing to lie down in a swamp, cheek by jowl with an alligator, I believe they would have offered no word of remonstrance. Those Mexican half-breeds, half

Indian half Spaniard, with sometimes a dash of the Negro, are themselves so little pervious to the dangers and evils of their soil and climate, that they forget that Yankee flesh and blood may be rather more susceptible ; that niguas * and musquitos, and *vomito prieto*, as they call their infernal fever, are no trifles to encounter ; without mentioning the snakes, and scorpions, and alligators, and other creatures of the kind, which infest their strange, wild, unnatural, and yet beautiful country.

I had come to Mexico in company with Jonathan Rowley, a youth of Virginian raising, six-and-twenty years of age, six feet two in his stockings, with the limbs of a Hercules, and shoulders like the side of a house. It was towards the close of 1824 ; and the recent emancipation of Mexico from the Spanish yoke, and its self-formation into a republic, had given it a new and strong interest to us Americans. We had been told much, too, of the beauty of the country—but in this we were at first rather disappointed ; and we reached the capital without having seen anything, except some parts of the province of Vera Cruz, that could justify the extravagant encomiums we had heard lavished in the States

* The nigua is a small but very dangerous insect, which fixes itself in the feet, bores holes in the skin, and lays its eggs there. These, if not extracted, (which extraction, by the by, is a most painful operation,) cause first an intolerable itching, and, subsequently, sores and ulcers of a sufficiently serious nature to entail the loss of the feet.

upon the splendid scenery of Mexico. We had not, however, to go far southwards from the chief city, before the character of the country altered, and became such as to satisfy our most sanguine expectations. Forests of palms, of oranges, citrons, and bananas, filled the valleys: the marshes and low grounds were crowded with mahogany-trees, and with immense fern plants, in height equal to trees. All nature was on a gigantic scale—the mountains of an enormous height, the face of the country seamed and split by *barrancas* or ravines, hundreds, ay, thousands of feet deep, and filled with the most abundant and varied vegetation. The sky, too, was of the deep glowing blue of the tropics, the sort of blue which seems varnished or clouded with gold. But this ardent climate and teeming soil are not without their disadvantages. Vermin and reptiles of all kinds, and the deadly fever of those latitudes, render the low lands uninhabitable for eight months out of the twelve. At the same time, there are large districts comparatively free from those plagues—perfect gardens of Eden, of such extreme beauty, that the mere act of living and breathing amongst their enchanting scenes becomes a positive and real enjoyment. The heart leaps with delight, and the soul is elevated, by the contemplation of those regions of fairy-like magnificence.

The most celebrated among these favoured provinces is the valley of Oaxaca, in which two moun-

tainous districts, the Mistecca and Tzapoteca, bear off the palm of beauty. It was through this immense valley, nearly three hundred leagues in length, and surrounded by the highest mountains in Mexico, that we were now journeying. The kind attention of our chargé-d'affaires at the Mexican capital, had procured us every possible facility in travelling through a country whose soil was at that time rarely trodden by any but native feet. We had numerous letters to the alcaldes and authorities of the towns and villages which are sparingly sprinkled over the southern provinces of Mexico; we were to have escorts when necessary; every assistance, protection, and facility, were to be afforded us. But as neither the authorities nor his excellency, Uncle Sam's envoy, could make inns and houses where none existed, it followed that we were often obliged to sleep *à la belle étoile*, with the sky for a covering. And a right splendid roof it was to our bedchamber, that tropical sky, with its constellations, all new to us northerners, and every star magnified, by the effect of the atmosphere, to an incredible size. Mars and Saturn, Venus and Jupiter, had disappeared; the great and little Bear were still to be seen; in the far distance the ship Argo and the glowing Centaur; and, beautiful above all, the glorious sign of Christianity, the colossal Southern Cross, in all its brightness and sublimity, glittering in silvery magnificence out of its setting of dark blue crystal.

We were travelling with a state and a degree of luxury that would have excited the contempt of our backwoodsmen ; but in a strange country we thought it best to do as the natives did ; and accordingly, instead of mounting our horses and setting forth alone, with our rifles slung on our shoulders, and a few handfuls of parched corn and dried flesh in our hunting pouches, we journeyed Mexican fashion, with a whole string of mules, a guide, a couple of *arrieros* or muleteers, a cook, and one or two other attendants. Whilst the latter slung our hammocks to the lowermost branches of a tree—for in that part of Mexico it is not very safe to sleep upon the ground, on account of the snakes and vermin—our *cocinero* lit a fire against the rock, and in a very few minutes an iguana which we had shot that day was spitted and roasting before it. It was strange to see this hideous creature, in shape between a lizard and a dragon, twisting and turning in the light of the fire ; and its disgusting appearance might have taken away some people's appetites ; but we knew by experience that there is no better eating than a roasted iguana. We made a hearty meal off this one, concluding it with a pull at the rum flask, and then clambered into our hammocks ; the Mexicans stretched themselves on the ground with their heads upon the saddles of the mules, and both masters and men were soon asleep.

It was somewhere about midnight when I was

awakened by an indescribable sensation of oppression from the surrounding atmosphere. The air seemed to be no longer air, but some poisonous exhalation that had suddenly arisen and enveloped us. From the rear of the ravine in which we lay, billows of dark mephitic mist rolled forward, surrounding us with their baleful influence. It was the *vomito prieto*, the fever itself, embodied in the shape of a fog. At the same moment, and whilst I was gasping for breath, a sort of cloud seemed to settle upon me, and a thousand stings, like red-hot needles, were run into my hands, face, neck—into every part of my limbs and body that was not triply guarded by clothing. I instinctively stretched forth my hands and closed them, clutching by the action hundreds of enormous musquitos, whose droning, singing noise now almost deafened me. The air was literally filled with a dense swarm of these insects; and the agony caused by their repeated and venomous stings was indescribable. It was a real plague of Egypt.

Rowley, whose hammock was slung some ten yards from mine, soon gave tongue: I heard him kicking and plunging, spluttering and swearing, with a vigour and energy that would have been ludicrous under any other circumstances; but matters were just then too serious for a laugh. With the torture, for such it was, of the musquito bites, and the effect of the insidious and poisonous vapours that each moment thickened around me,

I was already in a high state of fever, alternately glowing with heat and shivering with cold, my tongue parched, my eyelids throbbing, my brain on fire.

There was a heavy thump upon the ground. It was Rowley jumping out of his hammock. "Damnation!" roared he, "where are we? On the earth, or under the earth?— We must be—we are—in their Mexican purgatory. We are, or there's no snakes in Virginny. Hallo, arrieros! Pablo! Mateo!"

At that moment a scream—but a scream of such terror and anguish as I never heard before or since—a scream as of women in their hour of agony and extreme peril—sounded within a few paces of us. I sprang out of my hammock; and, as I did so, two white and graceful female figures darted or rather flew past me, shrieking—and oh! in what heart-rending tones—for "*Socorro! Socorro! Por Dios! Help! Help!*" Close upon the heels of the fugitives, bounding and leaping along with enormous strides and springs, came three or four dark objects which resembled nothing earthly. The human form they certainly possessed; but so hideous and horrible, so unnatural and spectre-like was their aspect, that their sudden encounter in that gloomy ravine, and in the almost darkness that surrounded us, might well have shaken the strongest nerves. We stood for a second, Rowley and myself, paralysed with astonishment at these

strange appearances ; but another piercing scream restored to us our presence of mind. One of the women had either tripped or fallen from fatigue, and she lay, a white heap, upon the ground. The drapery of the other was in the clutch of one of the spectres, or devils, or whatever they were, when Rowley, with a cry of horror, rushed forward and struck a furious blow at the monster with his *machete*. At the same time, and almost without knowing how, I found myself engaged with another of the creatures. But the contest was no equal one. In vain did we stab and strike with our machetes ; our antagonists were covered and defended with a hard bristly hide, which our knives, although keen and pointed, had great difficulty in penetrating ; and on the other hand we found ourselves clutched in long sinewy arms, terminating in hands and fingers, whose nails were as sharp and strong as an eagle's talons. I felt these horrible claws strike into my shoulders as the creature seized me, and, drawing me towards him, pressed me as in the hug of a bear ; whilst his hideous half-man half-brute visage was grinning and snarling at me, and his long keen white teeth were snapping and gnashing within six inches of my face.

"God of heaven ! This is horrible ! Rowley ! Help !"

But Rowley, in spite of his gigantic strength, was powerless as an infant in the grasp of these

terrible opponents. He was within a few paces of me, struggling with two of them, and making superhuman efforts to regain possession of his knife, which had dropped or been wrenched from his hand. And all this time, where were our arrieros? Were they attacked likewise? Why didn't they come and help us? All this time!—pshaw! it was no time: it all passed in the space of a few seconds, in the circumference of a few yards, and in the feeble glimmering light of the stars, and of the smouldering embers of our fire, which was at some distance from us.

“Ha! that has told!” A stab, dealt with the energy of despair, had entered my antagonist's side. But I was like to pay dearly for it. Uttering a deafening yell of pain and fury, the monster clasped me closer to his foul and loathsome body; his sharp claws, dug deeper into my back, seemed to tear up my flesh: the agony was insupportable—my eyes swam, and my senses almost left me. Just then—Crack! crack! Two—four—a dozen musket and pistol shots, followed by such a chorus of yellings and howlings and unearthly laughter! The creature that held me seemed startled—relaxed his grasp slightly. At that moment a dark arm was passed before my face, there was a blinding flash, a yell, and I fell to the ground, released from the clutch of my opponent. I remember nothing more. Overcome by pain, fatigue, terror, and the noxious vapours of that

vile ravine, my senses abandoned me, and I swooned away.

When consciousness returned, I found myself lying upon some blankets, under a sort of arbour of foliage and flowers. It was broad day; the sun shone brightly, the blossoms smelled sweet, the gay-plumaged humming-birds darted and shot about in the sunbeams like so many animated fragments of a prism. A Mexican Indian, standing beside my couch, and whose face was unknown to me, held out a cocoa-nutshell containing some liquid, which I eagerly seized and drank off. The draught (it was a mixture of citron juice and water) revived me greatly; and raising myself on my elbow, although with much pain and difficulty, I looked around, and beheld a scene of bustle and life which to me was quite unintelligible. Upon the shelving hillside on which I lay, a sort of encampment was established. A number of mules and horses wandered about at liberty, or, fastened to trees and bushes, ate the forage that had been collected and laid before them. Some were provided with handsome and commodious saddles; others had pack-saddles, intended apparently for the conveyance of numerous sacks, cases, and wallets, that were scattered about on the ground. Several muskets and rifles rested here and there against the trees; and a dozen or fifteen men were occupied in various ways—some filling up saddle-bags or fastening luggage on the mules,

others lying on the ground smoking, one party surrounding a fire at which cooking was going on. At a short distance from my bed was another similarly composed couch, occupied by a man muffled up in blankets, and having his back turned towards me, so that I was unable to obtain a view of his features.

"What is all this? Where am I? Where is Rowley—our guide—where are they all?"

"*No entiendo*," answered my brown-visaged Ganymede, shaking his head, and with a good-humoured smile.

"*Adonde estamos?*"

"*En el valle de Chihuahua, en el gran valle de Oaxaca y Guatemala; diez leguas de Tarifa.*" —In the valley of Chihuahua; ten leagues from Tarifa.

The figure lying on the bed near me now made a movement, and turned round. What could it be? Its face was like a lump of raw flesh streaked and stained with blood. No features were distinguishable.

"Who are you? What are you?" cried I.

"Rowley," it answered: "Rowley I was, at least, if those devils haven't changed me."

"Then changed you they have," cried I, with a wild laugh. "Good God! have they scalped him alive, or what? That is not Rowley."

The Mexican, who had gone to give some drink to the creature claiming to be Rowley, now opened

a valise that lay on the ground a short distance off, and took out a small looking-glass, which he brought and held before my face. It was then only that I called past occurrences to mind, and understood how it was that the mask of human flesh lying near me might indeed be Rowley. He was, if anything, less altered than myself. My eyes were almost closed; my lips, nose, and whole face swollen to an immense size, and perfectly unrecognisable. I involuntarily recoiled in dismay and disgust at my own appearance. The horrible night passed in the ravine, the foul and suffocating vapours, the furious attack of the mosquitos—the bites of which, and the consequent fever and inflammation, had thus disfigured us—all recurred to our memory. But the women, the fight with the monsters—beasts—Indians—whatever they were, that was still incomprehensible. It was no dream: my back and shoulders still smarted from the wounds inflicted on them by the claws of those creatures, and I now felt that various parts of my limbs and body were swathed in wet bandages. I was mustering my Spanish to ask an explanation of the Mexican who stood beside me, when I suddenly perceived a great bustle in the encampment, and saw everybody crowding to meet a number of persons who just then emerged from the high fern, and amongst whom I recognised our arrieros and servants. The new-comers were grouped around something which they dragged

along the ground; several women—for the most part young and graceful creatures, their slender, supple forms muffled in the flowing picturesque *rebozos* and *frazadas*—preceded the party, looking back occasionally with an expression of mingled horror and triumph; all with rosaries in their hands, the beads of which ran rapidly through their fingers, whilst they occasionally kissed the cross, or made the sign on their breasts or in the air.

"*Un Zambo muerto! Un Zambo muerto!*" shouted they as they drew near.

"*Han matado un Zambo!* They have killed a Zambo!" repeated my attendant in a tone of exultation.

The party came close up to where Rowley and I lay; the women stood aside, jumping and laughing, and crossing themselves, and crying out, "*Un Zambo! Un Zambo muerto!*" the group opened, and we saw, lying dead upon the ground, one of our horrible antagonists of the preceding night.

"Good God, what is that?" cried Rowley and I, with one breath. "*Un demonio!* a devil!"

"*Perdonen vds, Señores—Un Zambo mono—muy terribles los Zambos.* Terrible monkeys these Zambos."

"Monkeys!" cried I.

"Monkeys!" repeated poor Rowley, raising himself up into a sitting posture by the help of

his hands. "Monkeys—apes—by Jove! We've been fighting with monkeys, and it's they who have mauled us in this way. Well, Jonathan Rowley, think of your coming from old Virginny to Mexico to be whipped by a monkey. It's gone goose with *your* character. You can never show your face in the States again. Whipped by an ape!—an ape, with a tail and a hairy — O Lord! Whipped by a monkey!"

And the ludicrousness of the notion overcoming his mortification, and the pain of his wounds and bites, he sank back upon the bed of blankets and banana leaves, laughing as well as his swollen face and sausage-looking lips would allow him.

It was as much as I could do to persuade myself that the carcass lying before me had never been inhabited by a human soul. It was humiliating to behold the close affinity between this huge ape and our own species. Had it not been for the tail, I could have fancied I saw the dead body of some prairie hunter dressed in skins. It was exactly like a powerful, well-grown man; and even the expression of the face had more of bad human passions than of animal instinct. The feet and thighs were those of a muscular man; the legs rather too curved and calfless, though I have seen Negroes who had scarcely better ones; the tendons of the hands stood out like whipcords; the nails were as long as a tiger's claws. No wonder that we had been overmatched in our

struggle with the brutes. No man could have withstood them. The arms of this one were like packets of cordage, all muscle, nerve, and sinew ; and the hands were clasped together with such force, that the efforts of eight or ten Mexicans and Indians were insufficient to disunite them.

Whatever remained to be cleared up in our night's adventures was now soon explained. Our guide, through ignorance or thoughtlessness, had allowed us to take up our bivouac within a very unsafe distance of one of the most pestiferous swamps in the whole province. Shortly after we had fallen asleep, a party of Mexican travellers had arrived, and established themselves within a few hundred yards of us, but on a rising ground, where they avoided the mephitic vapours and the musquitos which had so tortured Rowley and myself. In the night, two of the women, having ventured a short distance from the encampment, were surprised by the zambos, or huge man-apes, common in some parts of Southern Mexico ; and finding themselves cut off from their friends, had fled they knew not whither, fortunately for them in the direction of our bivouac. Their screams, our shout, and the yellings and diabolical laughter of the zambos, had brought the Mexicans to our assistance. The monkeys showed no fight after the first volley ; several of them must have been wounded, but only the one now lying before us had remained upon the field.

The Mexicans we had fallen amongst were from the Tzapoteca, principally cochineal gatherers, and kinder-hearted people there could not well be. They seemed to think they never could do enough for us—the women especially, and more particularly the two whom we had endeavoured to rescue from the power of the apes. These latter certainly had cause to be grateful. It made us shudder to think of their fate had they not met with us. It was the delay caused by our attacking the brutes that had given the Mexicans time to come up.

Every attention was shown to us. We were fanned with palm-leaves, refreshed with cooling drinks, our wounds carefully dressed and bandaged, our heated, irritated, musquito-bitten limbs and faces washed with balsam and the juice of herbs: more tender and careful nurses it would be impossible to find. We soon felt better, and were able to sit up and look about us, carefully avoiding, however, to look at each other, for we could not get reconciled to the horrible appearance of our swollen, bloody, disgusting features. From our position on the rising ground, we had a full view over the frightful swamp at the entrance of which all our misfortunes had happened. There it lay, steaming like a great kettle; endless mists rising from it, out of which appeared here and there the crown of some mighty tree towering above the banks of vapour. To the left were cliffs and crags, which had the appearance of being

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baseless, and of swimming on the top of the mist. Vultures and carrion-birds circled screaming above the huge caldron, or perched on the tops of the tall palms, which looked like enormous umbrellas, or like the roofs of Chinese summer-houses. Out of the swamp itself proceeded the yellings, snarlings, and growlings of the alligators, bull-frogs, and myriads of unclean beasts that it harboured.

The air was unusually sultry and oppressive : from time to time the rolling of distant thunder was audible. We could hear the Mexicans consulting amongst themselves as to the propriety of continuing their journey, to which our suffering state seemed to be the chief obstacle. From what we could collect of their discourse, they were unwilling to leave us in this dangerous district, and in our helpless condition, with a guide and attendants who were either untrustworthy or totally incompetent to lead us aright. Yet there seemed to be pressing necessity for continuing the march ; and presently some of the older Mexicans, who appeared to have the direction of the caravan, came up to us and inquired how we felt, and if we thought we were able to travel ; adding that, from the signs on the earth and in the air, they feared a storm, and that the nearest habitation or shelter was at many leagues' distance. Thanks to the remedies that had been applied, our sufferings were much diminished. We felt weak and hungry ; and telling the Mexicans we should be

ready to proceed in half-an-hour, we desired our servants to get us something to eat. But our new friends forestalled them, and brought us a large piece of iguana, with roasted bananas, and cocoa-nutshell cups full of coffee, to all of which Rowley and I applied ourselves with much gusto. Meanwhile our muleteers and the Tzapotecans were busy packing their beasts and making ready for the start.

We had not eaten a dozen mouthfuls when we saw a man running down the hill with a branch in each hand. As soon as he appeared, a number of the Mexicans left their occupations and hurried to meet him.

"*Siete horas!*" shouted the man. "Seven hours, and no more!"

"No more than seven hours!" echoed the Tzapotecans, in tones of the wildest terror and alarm. "*La Santissima nos guarde!* It will take more than ten to reach the village."

"What's all that about?" said I, with my mouth full, to Rowley.

"Don't know—some of their Indian tricks, I suppose."

"*Que es esto?*" asked I carelessly. "What's the matter?"

"*Que es esto!*" repeated an old Tzapotecan, with long grey hair curling from under his *sombrero*, and a withered but finely marked countenance. "*Las aguas! El ouracan!* In seven hours the deluge and the hurricane!"

"*Vamos, por la Santissima!* For the blessed Virgin's sake, let us be gone!" cried a dozen of the Mexicans, pushing two green boughs into our very faces.

"What are those branches?"

"From the tempest-tree—the prophet of the storm," was the reply.

And Tzapotecans and women, arrieros and servants, ran about in the utmost terror and confusion, with cries of "*Vamos, paso redoblado!* Off with us, or we are all lost, man and beast," and saddling, packing, and scrambling on their mules. And before Rowley and I knew where we were, they tore us away from our iguana and coffee, and hoisted and pushed us into our saddles. Such a scene of bustle and desperate hurry I never beheld. The place where the encampment had been was alive with men and women, horses and mules, shouting, shrieking, talking, neighing, and kicking; but with all the confusion there was little time lost, and, in less than three minutes from the first alarm being given, we were scampering away over stock and stone, in a long, wild, irregular train.

The rapidity and excitement of our ride had the effect of calming our various sufferings, or of making us forget them; and we soon thought no more of the fever, or of stings or mosquito bites. It was a ride for life or death, and our horses stepped out as if they knew how much depended on their exertions.

In the hurry and confusion we had been mounted on horses instead of on our own mules ; and splendid animals they were. I doubt if our Virginians could beat them, and that is saying a great deal. There was no effort or straining in their movements ; it was mere play to them to surmount the numerous difficulties we encountered on our road. Over mountain and valley, swamp and barranca, always the same steady surefootedness—crawling like cats over the soft places, gliding like snakes up the steep rocky ascents, and stretching out with prodigious energy when the ground was favourable ; yet with such easy action that we scarcely felt the motion. We should have sat in the roomy Spanish saddles as comfortably as in arm-chairs, had it not been for the numerous obstacles in our path, which was strewn with fallen trees and masses of rock. We were obliged perpetually to stoop and bow our heads to avoid the creeping plants that swung and twined and twisted across the track, intermingled often with huge thorns as long as a man's arm. These latter stuck out from the trees on which they grew like so many brown bayonets ; and a man who had run up against one of them would have been transfixed by it as surely as though it had been of steel. We pushed on, in Indian file, following the two guides, who kept at the head of the party, and making our way through places where a wild-cat would have difficulty in pass-

ing; through thickets of mangroves, mimosas, and tall fern, and cactuses with their thorny leaves full twenty feet long; the path turning and winding all the while. Now and then a momentary improvement in the nature of the ground enabled us to catch a glimpse of the whole column of march.

We were struck by its picturesque appearance, the guides in front acting as pioneers, and looking out on all sides as cautiously and anxiously as though they had been soldiers expecting an ambuscade; the graceful forms of the women bowing and bending over their horses' manes, and often leaving fragments of their mantillas and rebozos on the branches and thorns of the labyrinth through which we struggled. But it was no time to indulge in contemplation of the picturesque, and of this we were constantly made aware by the anxious vociferations of the Mexicans. "*Vamos! Por Dios, vamos!*" cried they, if the slightest symptom of flagging became visible in the movements of any of the party; and at the words, our horses, as though gifted with understanding, pushed forward with renewed vigour and alacrity.

On we went—up hill and down, in the depths of the valley and over the soft fetid swamp. That valley of Oaxaca has just as much right to be called a valley as our Alleghanies would have to be called bottoms. In the States we should call it a chain of mountains. Out of it rise at every step hills a good two thousand feet above the level of the

valley, and four or five thousand above that of the sea ; but these are lost sight of, and become flat ground by the force of comparison—that is, when compared with the gigantic mountains that surround the valley on all sides like a frame. And what a splendid frame they compose, those colossal mountains, in their rich variety of form and colouring !—here shining out like molten gold, there changing to a dark bronze ; covered lower down with various shades of green, and with the crimson and purple, and violet and bright yellow, and azure and dazzling white, of the millions of paulinias and convolvuluses and other flowering plants, from amongst which rise the stately palm-trees, full a hundred feet high, their majestic green turbans towering like sultans' heads above the luxuriance of the surrounding flower and vegetable world. Then the mahogany-trees, the chicozapotes, and again in the barrancas the candelabra-like cactuses, and higher up the knotted and majestic live oak. An incessant change of plants, trees, and climate. We had been five hours in the saddle, and had already changed our climate three times ; passed from the temperate zone, the *tierra templada*, into the torrid heat of the *tierra muy caliente*. It was in the latter temperature that we found ourselves at the expiration of the above time, dripping with perspiration, roasting and stewing in the heat. We were surrounded by a new world of plants and animals. The borax and mangroves

and fern were here as lofty as forest-trees, whilst the trees themselves shot up like steeples. In the thickets around us were numbers of black tigers—we saw dozens of those cowardly sneaking beasts—iguanas full three feet long, squirrels double the size of any we had ever seen, and panthers, and wild pigs, and jackals, and apes and monkeys of every tribe and description, who threatened and grinned and chattered at us from the branches of the trees. But what is that yonder to the right, that stands out so white against the dark blue sky and the bronze-coloured rocks? A town—Quidricovi, d'ye call it?

We had now ridden a good five or six leagues, and began to think we had escaped the *aguas* or deluge, of which the prospect had so terrified our friends the Tzapotecans. Rowley calculated, as he went puffing and grumbling along, that it wouldn't do any harm to let our beasts draw breath for a minute or two. The scrambling and constant change of pace rendered necessary by the nature of the road, or rather track, was certainly dreadfully fatiguing both to man and horse. As for conversation, it was out of the question. We had plenty to do to avoid getting our necks broken, or our teeth knocked out, as we struggled along, up and down barrancas, through marshes and thickets, over rocks and fallen trees, and through mimosas and bushes laced and twined together with thorns and creeping plants—all which

would have been beautiful in a picture, but was most infernally unpoetical in reality.

"*Vamos! Por la Santissima Madre, vamos!*" yelled our guides, and the cry was taken up by the Mexicans, in a shrill wild tone that jarred strangely upon our ears, and made the horses start and strain forward. Hurra! on we go, through thorns and bushes, which scratch and flog us, and tear our clothes to rags. We shall be naked if this lasts long. It is a regular race. In front the two guides, stooping, nodding, bowing, crouching down, first to one side, then to the other, like a couple of mandarins or Indian idols—behind them a Tzapotecan in his picturesque capa, then the women, then more Tzapotecans. There is little thought about precedence or ceremony; and Rowley and I, having been in the least hurry to start, find ourselves bringing up the rear of the whole column.

"*Vamos! Por la Santissima! Las aguas, las aguas!*" is again yelled by twenty voices. Hang the fools! Can't they be quiet with their eternal *vamos*? We can have barely two leagues more to go to reach the *rancho*, or village, they were talking of, and appearances are not as yet very alarming. It is getting rather thick, to be sure; but that's nothing, only the exhalations from the swamp, for we are again approaching one of those cursed swamps, and can hear the music of the alligators and bullfrogs. There they are, the

beauties ; a couple of them are taking a peep at us, sticking their elegant heads and long delicate snouts out of the slime and mud. The neighbourhood is none of the best ; but luckily the path is firm and good, carefully made, evidently by Indian hands. None but Indians could live and labour and travel habitually, in such a pestilential atmosphere. Thank God ! we are out of it at last. Again on firm forest ground, amidst the magnificent monotony of the eternal palms and mahogany-trees. But—see there !

A new and surpassingly beautiful landscape burst suddenly upon our view, seeming to dance in the transparent atmosphere. On either side mountains, those on the left in deep shadow, those on the right standing forth like colossal figures of light, in a beauty and splendour that seemed really supernatural, every tree, every branch shining in its own vivid and glorious colouring. There lay the valley in its tropical luxuriance and beauty, one sheet of bloom and blossom up to the topmost crown of the palm-trees, that shot up, some of them, a hundred and fifty and a hundred and eighty feet high. Thousands and millions of convolvuluses, paulinias, bignonias, dendrobiums, climbing from the fern to the tree trunks, from the trunks to the branches and summits of the trees, and thence again falling gracefully down, and catching and clinging to the mangroves and blocks of granite. It burst upon us like a scene of

enchantment, as we emerged from the darkness of the forest into the dazzling light and colouring of that glorious valley.

"*Misericordia, misericordia! Audi nos peccadores! Misericordia, las aguas!*" suddenly screamed and exclaimed the Mexicans in various intonations of terror and despair. We looked around us. What can be the matter? We see nothing. Nothing, except that from just behind those two mountains, which project like mighty promontories into the valley, a cloud begins to rise. "What is it? What is wrong?" A dozen voices answered us—

"*Por la Santa Virgen*, for the holy Virgin's sake, on, on! There is no time for words. We have still two leagues to go, and in one hour comes the flood."

And they recommenced their howling, yelling chorus of "*Misericordia! Audi nos peccadores!*" and "*Santissima Virgen*, and *Todos santos y angeles!*"

"Are the fellows mad?" shouted Rowley, "What if the water does come? It won't swallow you. A ducking more or less is no such great matter. You're not made of sugar or salt. Many's the drenching I've had in the States, and none the worse for it. Yet our rains are no child's play neither."

On looking round us, however, we were involuntarily struck with the sudden change in the

appearance of the heavens. The usual golden blue colour of the sky was gone, and had been replaced by a dull gloomy grey. The quality of the air had also changed ; it was neither very warm nor very cold, but it had lost its lightness and elasticity, and oppressed and weighed us down. Presently we saw the dark cloud rise gradually from behind the hills, completely clearing their summits, and then sweep along until it hung over the valley, in form and appearance like some monstrous night-moth, resting the tips of its enormous wings on the mountains on either side. To our right we still saw the roofs and walls of Quidricovi, apparently at a very short distance.

"Why not go to Quidricovi?" shouted I to the guides—"we cannot be far off."

"More than five leagues," answered the men, shaking their heads and looking up anxiously at the huge moth, which still crept and crawled on, each moment darker and more threatening. It was like a frightful monster, or the fabled Kraken, working itself along by its claws, which were struck deep into the mountain-wall on either side of its line of progress, and casting its hideous shadow over hill and dale, forest and valley, clothing them in gloom and darkness. To our right hand and behind us, the mountains were still of a glowing golden red, lighted up by the sun ; but to the left, and in our front, all was black and dark. With the same glance we beheld the deepest gloom and

the brightest day, meeting each other, but not mingling. It was a strange and ominous sight.

Ominous enough ; and the brute creation feel it so as well as ourselves. The chattering parrots, the hopping, gibbering, quarrelsome apes, all the birds and beasts, scream and cry and flutter and spring about, as though seeking a refuge from some impending danger. Even our horses tremble and groan—refuse to go on, start and snort. The whole animal world is in commotion—seized with an overwhelming panic. The forest teems with inhabitants. Whence come they, all these living things? On every side is heard the howling and snarling of beasts, the frightened cries and chirpings of birds. The vultures and turkey-buzzards, which a few minutes before circled high in the air, now scream amidst the branches of the mahogany-trees ; every creature that has life is running, scampering, flying—apes and tigers, birds and creeping things.

“*Vamos, por la Santissima !* On ! or we are all lost.”

And we ride, we rush along—neither masses of rock, nor fallen trees, nor thorns and brambles, check our wild career. Over everything we go, leaping, scrambling, plunging, riding like desperate men, flying from a danger of which the nature is not clearly defined, but which we feel to be great and imminent. It is a frightful terror-striking foe, that huge night-moth, which comes ever nearer,

growing each moment bigger and blacker. Looking behind us, we catch one last glimpse of the red and bloodshot sun, which the next instant disappears behind the edge of the mighty cloud.

Still we push on. Hosts of tigers, and monkeys both large and small, and squirrels and jackals, come close up to us as if seeking shelter, and then, finding none, retreat howling into the forest. There is not a breath of air stirring, yet all nature—plants and trees, men and beasts—quivers and trembles with apprehension. Our horses pant and groan as they bound along with dilated nostrils and glaring eyes, shaking in every limb, sweating at every pore, half wild with terror; giving springs and leaps that more resemble those of a hunted tiger than of a horse.

The prayers and exclamations of the terrified Mexicans continued without intermission, whispered and shrieked and groaned in every variety of intonation. The earthly hue of intense terror was upon every countenance. For some moments a deathlike stillness, an unnatural calm, reigned around us: it was as though the elements held their breath, and collected their energies for some mighty outbreak. Then came a low indistinct moaning sound, that seemed to issue from the bowels of the earth. The warning was significant.

"Halt! stop!" shouted we to the guides. "Stop! and let us seek shelter from the storm."

"On! for God's sake, on! or we are lost," was the reply.

Thank Heaven ! the path gets wider—we come to a descent—it leads us out of the forest. If the storm came on whilst we were among the trees, we might be crushed to death by the falling branches. We are close to a barranca.

"Alerto ! Alerto !" shrieked the Mexicans.
"Madre de Dios ! Dios ! Dios !"

And well might they call to God for help in that awful moment. The gigantic night-moth gaped and shot forth tongues of fire—a ghastly white flame, that contrasted strangely and horribly with the dense black cloud whence it issued. There was a peal of thunder that shook the earth, then a pause, during which nothing was heard but the panting of our horses as they dashed across the barranca, and strained up the steep side of a knoll or hillock. The cloud again opened ; for a second everything was lighted up. Another thunder-clap, and then, as though the gates of its prison had been suddenly burst, the tempest came forth in its might and fury, breaking, crushing, and sweeping away all that opposed it. The trees of the forest staggered and tottered for a moment, as if making an effort to bear up against the storm ; but it was in vain : the next instant, with a report like that of ten thousand cannon, whole acres of mighty trees were snapped off, their branches shivered, their roots torn up ; it was no longer a forest but a chaos, an ocean of boughs and tree-trunks, that were tossed about like the waves of the sea, or

thrown into the air like straws. The atmosphere was darkened with dust, and leaves, and branches.

"God be merciful to us! Rowley! where are you? No answer. What is become of them all?"

A second blast more furious than the first. Can the mountains resist it? will they stand? By the Almighty! they do not. The earth trembles; the hillock, on the lee-side of which we are, rocks and shakes. The air is thick and suffocating—full of dust and saltpetre and sulphur. We are like to choke. All around is dark as night. We see nothing, hear nothing but the howling of the hurricane, and the thunder and rattle of falling trees and shivered branches.

Suddenly the hurricane ceases, and all is hushed; but so suddenly, that the change is startling and unnatural. No sound is audible save the creaking and moaning of the trees with which the ground is cumbered. It is like a sudden pause in a battle, when the roar of cannon and clang of charging squadrons cease, and nought is heard but the groaning of the wounded, the agonised sobs and gasps of the dying.

The report of a pistol is heard; then another, a third, hundreds, thousands of them. It is the flood, *las aguas*: the shots are drops of rain; but such drops! each as big as a hen's egg. They strike with the force of enormous hailstones—stunning and blinding us. The next moment there is no distinction of drops, the windows of heaven

are opened ; it is no longer rain or flood, but a sea, a cataract, a Niagara. The hillock on which I stand, undermined by the waters, gives way and crumbles under me ; in ten seconds' time I find myself in the barranca, which is converted into a river, off my horse, which is gone I know not whither. The only person I see near me is Rowley, also dismounted and struggling against the stream, which, already up to our waists, sweeps along with it huge branches and entire trees, that threaten each moment to carry us away with them, or to crush us against the rocks. We avoid these dangers, God knows how, make violent efforts to stem the torrent and gain the side of the barranca ; although, even should we succeed, it is so steep that we can scarcely hope to climb it without assistance. And whence is that assistance to come ? Of the Mexicans we see or hear nothing. Doubtless they are all drowned or dashed to pieces. They were higher up on the hillock than we were, must consequently have been swept down with more force, and were probably carried away by the torrent. Nor can we hope for a better fate. Wearied by our ride, weakened by the fever and sufferings of the preceding night, we are in no condition to strive much longer with the furious elements. For one step that we gain, we lose two. The waters rise ; already they are nearly to our armpits. It is in vain to resist longer. Our fate is sealed.

"Rowley, all is over—let us die like men. God have mercy on our souls!"

Rowley was a few paces higher up the barranca. He made me no answer, but looked at me with a calm, cold, and yet somewhat regretful smile upon his countenance. Then all at once he ceased his efforts to resist the stream and gain the bank, folded his arms on his breast and gave a look up and around him, as though to bid farewell to the world he was about to leave. The current was sweeping him rapidly down towards me, when a wild hurra burst from his lips, and he suddenly recommenced his struggles against the waters, striving violently to retain a footing on the slippery, uneven bed of the stream.

"*Tenga! Tenga!*" screamed a dozen voices, that seemed to proceed from spirits of the air; and at the same moment something whistled about my ears and struck me a smart blow across the face. With the instinct of a drowning man, I clutched the *lasso* that had been thrown to me. Rowley was at my elbow and seized it also. It was immediately drawn tight, and by its aid we gained the bank, and ascended the side of the barranca, composed of rugged, declivitous rocks, affording but scanty foot-hold. God grant the *lasso* prove tough! The strain on it is fearful. Rowley is a good fifteen stone, and I am no feather; and in some parts of our perilous ascent the rocks are almost as perpendicular and

smooth as a wall of masonry, and we are obliged to cling with our whole weight to the lasso, which stretches, and cracks, and seems to grow visibly thinner. Nothing but a strip of twisted cow-hide between us and a frightful agonising death on the sharp rocks and in the foaming waters below. But the lasso holds good, and now the chief peril is past: we get footing—a point of rock, or a tree-root to clutch at. Another strain up this rugged slope of granite, another pull at the lasso; a leap, a last violent effort, and—*Viva!*—we are seized under the arms, dragged up, held upon our feet for a moment, and then—we sink exhausted to the ground in the midst of the Tzapotecans, mules, arrieros, guides, and women, who are sheltered from the storm in a sort of natural cavern.

At the moment at which the hillock gave way under Rowley and myself, who were a short distance in rear of the party, the Mexicans succeeded in attaining firm footing on a broad rocky ledge, a shelf of the precipice that flanked the barranca. Upon this ledge, which gradually widened into a platform, they found themselves in safety under some projecting crags that sheltered them completely from the tempest. Thence they looked down upon the barranca, where they descried Rowley and myself struggling for our lives in the roaring torrent; and thence, by knotting several lassos together, they were able to give us the opportune aid which had rescued us from our desperate situa-

tion. But whether this aid had come soon enough to save our lives was still a question, or at least for some time appeared to be so. The life was driven out of our bodies by all we had gone through: we could not move a finger, and lay helpless and motionless, with only a glimmering indistinct perception, not amounting to consciousness, of what was going on around us. Fatigue, fever, and the sufferings of all kinds we had endured in the course of the last twenty hours, had completely exhausted and broken us down.

The storm did not last long in its violence, but swept onwards, leaving a broad track of desolation behind it. The Mexicans recommenced their journey, with the exception of four or five who remained with us and our arrieros and servants. The village to which we were proceeding was not above a league off; but even that short distance Rowley and myself were in no condition to accomplish. The kind-hearted Tzapotecans made us swallow cordials, stripped off our drenched and tattered garments, and wrapped us in an abundance of blankets. We fell into a deep sleep, which lasted all that evening and the greater part of the night, and so much refreshed us that about an hour before daybreak we were able to resume our march—at a slow pace, it is true, and suffering grievously in every part of our bruised and wounded limbs and bodies, at each jolt or rough motion of the mules, upon which we clung rather than sat.

Our path lay over hill and dale, perpetually rising and falling. We soon got out of the district or zone that had been swept by the preceding day's hurricane, and, after nearly an hour's ride, we paused on the crest of a steep descent, at whose foot, as our guides informed us, lay the land of promise, the long-looked-for *rancho*. Whilst the muleteers saw to the girths of their beasts, and gave the due equilibrium to the baggage, before commencing the downward march, Rowley and I sat upon our mules, wrapped in large Mexican *capas*, gazing at the morning-star as it sank down, and grew gradually paler and fainter. Suddenly the sky brightened, and a brilliant beam appeared—a point of light no bigger than a star, yet *not* a star, but of far rosier hue. The next moment a second sparkling spot appeared, near to the first, which now swelled out into a sort of fiery tongue, that licked round the silvery summit of the snow-clad mountain. As we gazed, five—ten—twenty hill-tops were tinged with the same rose-coloured glow; the next moment they were like fiery banners spread out against the heavens, whilst sparkling tongues and rays of golden light flashed and flamed round them, springing meteor-like from one mountain summit to another, lighting them up like a succession of beacons. Scarcely five minutes had elapsed since the distant pinacles of the mountains had appeared to us as huge phantom-like figures of a silvery white,

dimly marked out upon a dark star-spangled ground; now the whole immense chain blazed like volcanoes covered with glowing lava, rising out of the darkness that still lingered on their flanks and bases, visible and wonderful witnesses to the omnipotence of *Him* who said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

Above, all was broad day, flaming sunlight; below, all black night. Here and there streams of light burst through clefts and openings in the mountains, and then ensued an extraordinary kind of conflict. The shades of darkness lived and moved, struggled against the bright beams that fell amongst them and broke their masses, forcing them down the wooded heights, tearing them asunder and dispersing them like tissues of cob-web; so that, successively, as by a stroke of enchantment, were revealed first the deep indigo blue of the tamarinds and chicozapotes, then the bright green of the sugar-canes, lower down the darker green of the nopal-trees, lower still the white and green and gold and bright yellow of the orange and citron groves, and lowest of all, the stately fan-palms, and date-palms, and bananas—all glittering with millions of dewdrops, that covered them like a gauze veil embroidered with diamonds and rubies. And still, in the very next valley, all was darkness.

We sat silent and motionless, gazing at this scene of enchantment.

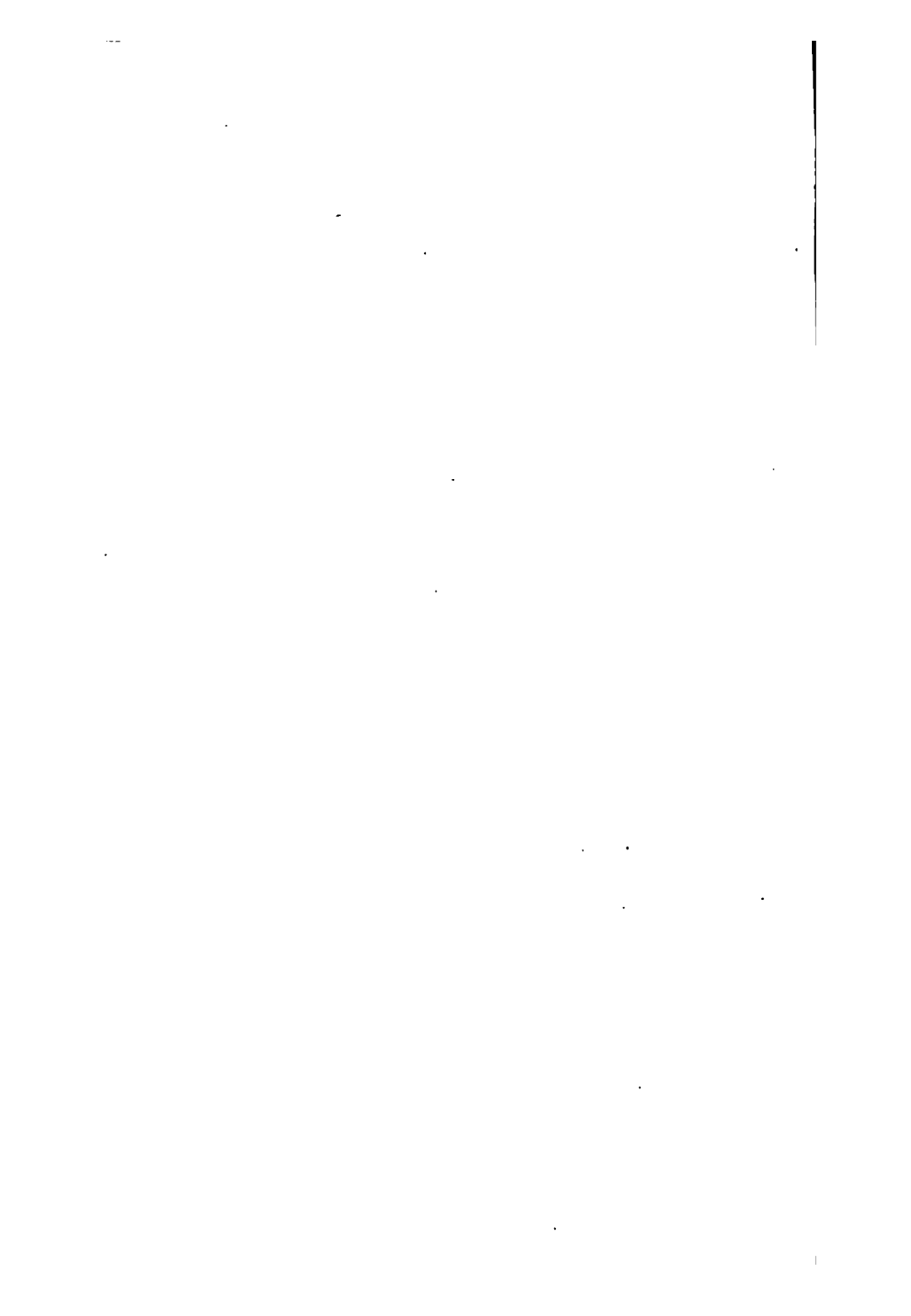
Presently the sun rose higher, and a flood of light illumined the whole valley, which lay some few hundred feet below us—a perfect garden, such as no northern imagination could picture forth; a garden of sugar-canes, cotton, and nopal-trees, intermixed with thickets of pomegranate and strawberry-trees, and groves of orange, fig, and lemon, giants of their kind, shooting up to a far greater height than the oak attains in the States—every tree a perfect hothouse, a pyramid of flowers, covered with bloom and blossom to its topmost spray. All was light, and freshness, and beauty; every object danced and rejoiced in the clear elastic golden atmosphere. It was an earthly paradise, fresh from the hand of its Creator, and at first we could discover no sign of man or his works. Presently, however, we discerned the village, lying almost at our feet, the small stone houses overgrown with flowers and embedded in trees; so that scarcely a square foot of roof or wall was to be seen. Even the church was concealed in a garland of orange-trees, and had lianas and star-flowered creepers climbing over and dangling from it, up as high as the slender cross that surmounted its square white tower. As we gazed, the first sign of life appeared in the village. A puff of blue smoke rose curling and spiral from a chimney, and the matin bell rang out its summons to prayer. Our Mexicans fell on their knees and crossed themselves, repeating their Ave-Marias.

We involuntarily took off our hats, and whispered a thanksgiving to the God who had been with us in the hour of peril, and was now so visible to us in his works.

The Mexicans rose from their knees.

"*Vamos ! Señores,*" said one of them, laying his hand on the bridle of my mule. "To the *rancho*, to breakfast."

We rode slowly down into the valley.



A SKETCH IN THE TROPICS

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CHAPTER I.

THE FUGITIVE.

THE year 1816 was a disastrous one for the cause of South American independence. The loss of the battle of Cachiri, following close upon the equally unlucky affairs of Puerta, Araguaita, and Alto de Tanumba, crushed for a time the hopes of the patriots. Their sufferings were great—their prospects in the highest degree gloomy.

On a November morning of the above-named year, about half-an-hour before daybreak, the door of an obscure house in the *calzada* of Guadalupe, at the Havannah, was cautiously opened, and a man put out his head, and gazed up and down the street as if to assure himself that no one was near. All was silence and solitude at that early hour, and presently the door, opening wider, gave egress to a young man muffled in a shabby cloak,

who, with hurried but stealthy step, took the direction of the port. Hastening noiselessly through the deserted streets and lanes, he soon reached the quay, upon which were numerous storehouses of sugar and other merchandise, and piles of dye-wood, awaiting shipment. Upon approaching one of the latter, the young man gave a low whistle, and the next instant a figure glided from between two huge heaps of logwood, and, seizing his hand, drew him into the hiding-place from which it had emerged.

A quarter of an hour elapsed, and the first faint tinge of day just appeared, when the noise of oars was heard, and presently, in the grey light, a boat was seen darting out of the mist that hung over the water. As it neared the quay, the two men left their concealment, and one of them, pointing to the person who sat in the stern of the boat, pressed his companion's hand, and, hurrying away, soon disappeared in the labyrinth of goods and warehouses.

The boat came up to the stairs. Of the three persons it contained, two sailors, who had been rowing, remained in it; the third, whose dress and appearance were those of the master of a merchant-vessel, sprang on shore, and walked in the direction of the town. As he passed before the logwood, the stranger stepped out and accosted him.

The seaman's first movement, and not an unna-

tural one, considering he was at the Havannah, and the day not yet broken, was to half-draw his cutlass from its scabbard; but the next moment he let it drop back again. The appearance of the person who addressed him was, if not altogether prepossessing, at least not much calculated to inspire alarm. He was a young man of handsome and even noble countenance, but pale and sickly-looking, like one bowed down by sorrow and illness.

"Are you the captain of the Philadelphian schooner that is on the point of sailing?" inquired he anxiously.

The seaman looked hard in the young man's face, and answered in the affirmative. The stranger's eyes sparkled.

"Can I have a passage for myself, a friend, and two children?" demanded he.

The sailor hesitated before he replied, and again scanned his interlocutor from head to foot with his keen grey eyes. There was something inconsistent, not to say suspicious, in the stranger's whole appearance. His cloak was stained and shabby, and his words were humble; but there was a fire in his eye that flashed forth in spite of himself, and his voice had that particular tone which the habit of command alone gives. The result of the sailor's scrutiny was unfavourable, and he shook his head negatively. The young man gasped for breath, and drew a well-filled purse from his bosom.

"I will pay beforehand," said he; "I will pay whatever you ask."

The American started; the contrast was too striking between the applicant's beggarly exterior and his heavy purse and large offers. He shook his head more decidedly than before. The stranger bit his lip till the blood came, his breast heaved, his whole manner was that of one who abandons himself to despair. The sailor felt a touch of compassion.

"Young man," said he in Spanish, "you are no merchant. What do you want at Philadelphia?"

"I want to go to Philadelphia. Here is my passage-money, here my pass. You are captain of the schooner. What do you require more?"

There was a wild vehemence in the tone and manner in which these words were spoken, that indisposed the seaman still more against his would-be passenger. Again he shook his head, and was about to pass on. The young man seized his arm.

"For the love of God, captain, take me with you! Take my unhappy wife and my poor children."

"Wife and children!" repeated the captain.
"Have you a wife and children?"

The words had brought home and its endearments vividly to the seaman's memory, and had touched a chord that readily vibrates in the heart either of American or Englishman.

The stranger groaned.

"You have committed no crime? you are not

flying from the arm of justice?" asked the captain sharply.

"So may God help me, no crime whatever have I committed!" replied the young man, raising his hand towards heaven.

"Then I will take you. Keep your money till you are on board. In an hour at furthest I weigh anchor."

The stranger answered nothing, but, as if relieved from some dreadful anxiety, drew a deep breath, and with a grateful look to heaven hurried from the spot.

When Captain Ready, of the smart-sailing Baltimore-built schooner, "The Speedy Tom," returned on board his vessel, and descended into the cabin, he was met by his new passenger, on whose arm hung a lady of dazzling beauty and grace. She was very plainly dressed, as were also two lovely children who accompanied her; but their clothes were of the finest materials, and the elegance of their appearance contrasted strangely with the rags and wretchedness of their husband and father. Lying on a chest, however, Captain Ready saw a pelisse and two children's cloaks of the shabbiest description, and which the newcomers had evidently just taken off.

This disguise and mystery revived the seaman's suspicions; and a doubt again arose in his mind as to the propriety of taking passengers who came on board under such equivocal circumstances. A feel-

ing of compassion, however, added to the graceful manners and sweet voice of the lady, decided him to persevere in his original intention ; and politely requesting her to make herself at home in the cabin, he returned on deck. Ten minutes later the anchor was weighed, and the schooner in motion.

The sun had risen and dissipated the morning mist. Some distance astern of the now fast-advancing schooner rose the streets and houses of the Havannah, and the forest of masts occupying its port ; to the right frowned the castle of the Molo, whose threatening embrasures the vessel rapidly approached. Husband and wife stood upon the cabin stairs, gazing with breathless anxiety at the fortress.

As the schooner arrived opposite the castle, a small postern, leading out upon the jetty, was opened, and an officer and six soldiers issued forth. Four men, who had been lying on their oars in a boat at the jetty stairs, sprang up.

The soldiers jumped in, their bayonets glittering in the early sunbeams, and the rowers pulled in the direction of the schooner.

"*Jesus Maria y José !*" exclaimed the lady.

"*Madre de Dios !*" groaned her husband.

At this moment the fort made a signal.

"Up with the helm !" shouted Captain Ready.

The schooner rounded to ; the boat came flying over the water, and in a few moments was along-

side. The soldiers and their commander stepped on board.

The latter was a very young man, possessed of a truly Spanish countenance—grave and stern. In few words he desired the captain to produce his ship's papers, and parade his seamen and passengers. The papers were handed to him without an observation; he glanced his eye over them, inspected the sailors one after the other, and then looked in the direction of the cabin, expecting the appearance of the passengers, who at length came on deck, the stranger carrying one of the children, and his wife the other. The Spanish officer started.

"Do you know that you have a state-criminal on board?" thundered he to the captain. "What means this?"

"*Santa Virgen!*" exclaimed the lady, and fell fainting into her husband's arms. There was a moment's deep silence. All present seemed touched by the misfortunes of this youthful pair. The young officer sprang to the assistance of the husband, and, relieving him of the child, enabled him to give his attention to his wife, whom he laid gently down upon the deck.

"I am grieved at the necessity," said the officer, "but you must return with me."

The American captain, who had contemplated this scene apparently quite unmoved, now ejected from his mouth a huge quid of tobacco, replaced it

by another, and then stepping up to the officer, touched him on the arm, and offered him the pass he had received from his passengers. The Spaniard waved him back almost with disgust. There was, in fact, something very unpleasant in the apathy and indifference with which the Yankee contemplated the scene of despair and misery before him. Such cold-bloodedness was premature and unnatural in a man who could not yet have seen more than five-and-twenty summers. A close observer, however, would have remarked that the muscles of his face were agitated by a slight convulsive twitching, when at that moment his mate stepped forward and whispered to him. Approaching the Spaniard for the second time, Ready invited him to partake of a slight refreshment in his cabin, a courtesy which it is usual for the captains of merchant-vessels to pay to the visiting officer. The Spaniard accepted, and they went below.

The steward was busy covering the cabin table with plates of Boston crackers, olives, and almonds, and he then uncorked a bottle of fine old Madeira, which looked like liquid gold as it gurgled into the glasses. Captain Ready was quite a different person in the cabin and on deck. Throwing aside his dry, say-little manner, he was now goodhumour and civility personified, and lavished on his guest all those obliging attentions which no one better knows the use of than a Yankee, when he wishes to administer a dose of what he himself would call

"soft sawder." Ready soon persuaded the officer of his entire guiltlessness in the unpleasant affair that had just occurred; and the Spaniard told him by no means to make himself uneasy, that the pass had been given for another person, and that the prisoner was a man of great importance, whom he considered himself excessively lucky to have been able to recapture.

Most Spaniards like a glass of Madeira, particularly when olives serve as the whet. The American's wine was first-rate, and the officer found himself particularly comfortable in the cabin. He did not forget, however, to desire that the prisoner's baggage might be placed in the boat, and, with a courteous apology for leaving him a moment alone, Captain Ready hastened to give the necessary orders.

When the captain reached the deck, a heart-rending scene presented itself to him. His unfortunate passenger was seated on one of the hatchways, despair legibly written on his pale features. The eldest child had climbed up on his knee, and looked wistfully into its father's face, and his wife hung round his neck sobbing audibly. A young negress, who had come on board with them, held the other child, an infant a few months old, in her arms. Ready took the prisoner's hand.

"I hate tyranny," said he, "as every American must. Had you confided your position to me a few hours sooner, I would have got you safe off.

But now I see nothing to be done. We are under the cannon of the fort, which could sink us in ten seconds. Who and what are you? Say quickly, for time is precious."

"I am a Columbian by birth," replied the young man, "an officer in the Patriot army. I was taken prisoner at the battle of Cachiri, and brought to the Havannah with several companions in misfortune. My wife and children were allowed to follow me, for the Spaniards were not sorry to have one of the first families of Columbia entirely in their power. Four months I lay in a frightful dungeon, with rats and reptiles for sole companions. It is a miracle that I am still alive. Out of seven hundred prisoners, but a handful of emaciated objects remain to testify to the barbarous cruelty of our captors. A fortnight back they took me out of my prison a mere skeleton, in order to preserve my life, and quartered me in a house in the city. Two days ago I heard that I was to return to the dungeon. It was my death-warrant, for I could not live another week in that frightful cell. A true friend, in spite of danger, and by dint of gold, procured me the pass of a Spaniard dead of the yellow fever. By means of that paper, and by your assistance, we trusted to escape. Captain!" said the young man, starting to his feet, and clasping Ready's hand, his hollow sunken eye gleaming wildly as he spoke, "my only hope is in you. If you give

me up, I am a dead man, for I have sworn to perish rather than return to the miseries of my prison. I fear not death—I am a soldier; but alas for my poor wife, my helpless, deserted children!”

The Yankee captain passed his hand across his forehead with the air of one greatly perplexed, then turned away without a word, and walked to the other end of the vessel. Giving a glance upwards and around him that seemed to take in the appearance of the sky, and the probabilities of good or bad weather, he ordered some of the sailors to bring the luggage of the passenger upon deck, but not to put it into the boat. He told the steward to give the soldiers and boatmen a couple of bottles of rum, and then, after whispering for a few seconds in the ear of his mate, he approached the cabin stairs. As he passed the Columbian family, he said in a low voice, and without looking at them,

“Trust in Him who helps when need is at the greatest.”

Scarcely had the Captain uttered the words, when the Spanish officer sprang up the cabin stairs, and as soon as he saw the prisoners, ordered them into the boat. Ready, however, interfered, and begged him to allow his unfortunate passenger to take a farewell glass before he left the vessel. To this the young officer good-naturedly consented, and himself led the way into the cabin.

They took their places at the table, and the

captain opened a fresh bottle, at the very first glass of which the Spaniard's eye glistened and his lips smacked. The conversation became more and more lively; Ready spoke Spanish fluently, and gave proof of a jovialty which no one would have suspected to belong to his character, dry and saturnine as his manner usually was. A quarter of an hour or more had passed in this way, when the schooner gave a sudden lurch, and the glasses and bottles jingled and clattered together on the table. The Spaniard started up.

"Captain!" cried he furiously, "the schooner is sailing!"

"Certainly," replied the captain, very coolly. "You surely did not expect, Señor, that we were going to miss the finest breeze that ever filled a sail?"

Without answering, the officer rushed upon deck, and looked in the direction of the Molo. They had left the fort full two miles behind them. The Spaniard literally foamed at the mouth.

"Soldiers!" vociferated he, "seize the captain and the prisoners. We are betrayed. And you, steersman, put about."

And betrayed they assuredly were; for whilst the officer had been quaffing his Madeira, and the soldiers and boatmen regaling themselves with the steward's rum, sail had been made on the vessel without noise or bustle, and, favoured by the breeze, she was rapidly increasing her dis-

tance from land. Ready preserved the utmost composure.

"Betrayed!" repeated he, replying to the vehement ejaculation of the Spaniard. "Thank God we are Americans, and have no trust to break, nothing to betray. As to this prisoner of yours, however, he must remain here."

"Here!" sneered the Spaniard—"we'll soon see about that, you treacherous"——

"Here!" quietly interrupted the captain. "Do not give yourself needless trouble, Señor; your soldiers' guns, as you may see, are in our hands, and my six sailors well provided with pistols and cutlasses. We eight are more than a match for you ten, and at the first suspicious movement you make, we fire on you."

The officer looked around, and his jaw dropped when he beheld his soldiers' muskets piled upon the deck, and guarded by two well-armed and determined-looking sailors.

"You would not dare"—exclaimed he.

"Indeed would I," replied Ready; "but I hope you will not force me to it. You must remain a few hours longer my guest, and then you can return to port in your boat. You will get off with a month's arrest, and, as compensation, you will have the satisfaction of having delivered a brave enemy from despair and death."

All this was spoken quietly and gravely, but, at the same time with such resolute decision of man-

ner, that the Spaniard winced with vexation. Yet he made one more attempt to intimidate his captor.

"Captain ! captain !" cried he, "this is dangerous jesting ; for, of course, it is but a jest."

"We Americans are not much given to jesting," carelessly replied the captain.

"Do you know that you are committing a capital crime—incurring the punishment of death?" cried the Spaniard vehemently.

"Were I a Spaniard, yes ; as an American, no," said the captain, dipping his finger, with a gesture of indescribably dry humour, into a bucket of seawater, which the steward just then lifted over the ship's side. "We are on the sea, on the American sea, on which you well know that we Americans are masters, and far too proud to let ourselves be dictated to by any nation whatever. Be reasonable and humane," he added, in a more friendly tone. "This Patriot officer has committed no crime, but, on the contrary, has done his duty—has done what our Washingtons, Putnams, Greenes, and thousands of our revolutionary heroes also did—has fought for his country's freedom ; and you, instead of treating him, an unhappy prisoner, with humanity, have tortured him to a skeleton ! Look at him, and say if I must not have a heart harder than stone to deliver him into the clutches of your inquisitors. He shall *not* go back."

The officer ground his teeth together, but even

yet he did not give up all hopes of getting out of the scrape. Resistance was evidently not to be thought of, his men's muskets being in the power of the Americans, who, with cocked pistols and naked cutlasses, stood on guard over them. The soldiers themselves did not seem very full of fight, and the boatmen were negroes, and consequently non-combatants. But there were several trincadores and armed cutters cruising about, and if he could manage to hail or make a signal to one of them, the schooner would be brought to, and the tables turned. He gazed earnestly at a sloop that just then crossed them at no great distance, staggering in towards the harbour under press of sail. The American read his thoughts.

"Do me the honour, Señor," said he, "to partake of a slight *dejeuner-à-la-fourchette* in the cabin. We shall also hope for the pleasure of your company at dinner. Supper you will probably eat at home."

And so saying, he motioned courteously towards the cabin stairs. The Spaniard looked in the seaman's face, and read in its decided expression, and in the slight smile of intelligence that played upon it, that he must not hope either to resist or outwit his polite but peremptory entertainer. So, making a virtue of necessity, he descended into the cabin.

Left to themselves, husband and wife fell, with an inarticulate but joyful cry, into each other's

arms. Their hearts were too full for words ; their lips refused utterance to the feelings of joy and thankfulness that overpowered them. They clung sobbing to each other, as closely clasped as if they never again would separate ; then they laughed out loud, delirious with delight, murmured broken sentences of affection, and gazed back shudderingly, and with eyes fixed and distended, at the cruel Havannah—at the horrible Molo.

Gradually the endless masses of the city, the confused chaos of sails, ropes, and masts, and the grim Molo itself, receded from the view of the fugitives. A glittering streak unrolled itself between them and the city, at first no wider than a silvered ribbon, but speedily increasing in length and breadth. With ecstasy inexpressible they watched its rapid growth ; and as the narrow strip grew into a broad ocean-mirror, it seemed to them a sign from heaven, promising deliverance and announcing safety. On went the schooner ; fainter and fainter became the outlines of city and harbour. Already the masts of the vessels were invisible ; only the pennons on their top-masts still fluttered like sea-birds at the far-distant horizon. The south-west breeze freshened, and the lively schooner was making her ten knots an hour. Absorbed in blissful feelings, the fugitives heeded not what passed around them, felt no fatigue, were insensible to hunger and thirst. The voice of the Spanish officer on the cabin stairs first

roused them from a state that resembled a bewildering dream.

The young Spaniard was in all the better humour for the *dejeuner-à-la-fourchette*. His national gravity had unbent, and he was remarkably sociable and talkative. He was laughing as he ascended the stairs, and assuring the captain that he had enjoyed the trip, and was well pleased to have made the acquaintance of a Yankee-American, although the pleasure was likely to cost him rather dear—a couple of months in the fortress, at the very least. All he hoped was, that if ever, in the varying chances of war, he should find himself in a similar predicament to the Columbian, he might also have the luck to meet with a Yankee to help him at a pinch. Frank and friendly was the captain's reply. Whoever had seen him then, would hardly have recognised the man whose aspect, two short hours previously, had been so gloomy and unprepossessing. The consciousness of a good and generous action lit up his manly, honest countenance, and gleamed joyfully in his eyes, as, arm in arm with the Spaniard, he paced his schooner's deck. Noble indeed, worthy of a hero or a demigod, did his countenance appear in the eyes of the rescued patriot and his happy wife.

But the schooner was now twenty miles from the Havannah; the Molo could hardly be discerned. It was time to part. The distance was

great enough to guarantee the escape of the fugitives, and as great as was prudent for those to come who had to return to shore in an open boat. The soldiers were ordered into theirs; the officer, as he stepped over the side, shook the captain heartily by the hand; the negroes dipped their oars into the water, and soon, from the schooner's deck, the boat was visible but as a mere speck upon the vast expanse of ocean.

The voyage was prosperous, and in eleven days the vessel reached its destination. The Columbian officer, his wife and children, were received with the utmost kindness and hospitality by the young and handsome wife of Captain Ready, in whose house they took up their quarters. They remained there two months, living in the most retired manner, with the double object of economising their scanty resources, and of avoiding the notice of the Philadelphians, who at that time viewed the patriots of Southern America with no very favourable eye. The insurrection against the Spaniards had injured the commerce between the United States and the Spanish colonies, and the purely mercantile and lucre-loving spirit of the Philadelphians made them look with dislike on any circumstances or persons who caused a diminution of their trade and profits.

At the expiration of the two months, an opportunity offered of a vessel going to Marguerite, then the headquarters of the patriots, and the place

where the first expeditions were formed under Bolivar against the Spaniards. Estoval (that was the name by which the Columbian officer was designated in his passport) gladly seized the opportunity, took a grateful and affectionate leave of his deliverer, and embarked with his wife and children. They had been several days at sea before they remembered that they had forgotten to tell their American friends their real name. The latter had never inquired it, and the Estovals being accustomed to address one another by their Christian names, it had never been mentioned.

Meantime, the good seed Captain Ready had sown, brought the honest Yankee but a sorry harvest. His employers had small sympathy with the feelings of humanity which had induced him to risk carrying off a Spanish state-prisoner from under the guns of a Spanish battery. Their correspondents at the Havannah had trouble and difficulty on account of the affair, and wrote to Philadelphia to complain of it. Ready lost his ship, and could only obtain from his employers certificates of character of so ambiguous and unsatisfactory a nature, that for a long time he found it impossible to get the command of another vessel.

CHAPTER II

THE BLOCKADE

It was in the month of March 1825 that I found myself in company with several Americans and Englishmen—for the most part masters of merchant vessels—seated in front of the French coffee-house at Lima. The subject of our conversation was not a very pleasant one—at least to me. Callao was at that time blockaded by the patriots, both by land and water; and we had been bound thither with Spanish goods on board. This may suffice to give an idea of the disagreeable topic of our discourse. To be more explicit, however, I may mention that we had left home—that is to say, Baltimore—in the month of November 1824, had sailed to Havannah, got rid of our cargo, taken in another—partly on our own, partly on Spanish government account—and had left the Havannah on the 1st December, just eight days before the famous battle of Ayacucho, the news of which followed on our heels, but never overtook us, so that we sailed round the South American continent;

and only learned them on reaching the latitude of Callao, when it was too late to turn back.

There was no disguising the fact that we were bound to Callao; our cargo—which comprised twenty thousand dollars' worth of cigars for the fortress—spoke too plainly; but I also doubt whether, even if disguise had been possible, my captain could have been withheld from the attempt to break the blockade. He had attempted the feat four years previously, when the patriot fleet was commanded by Cochrane, and had succeeded—no easy matter, as will be admitted by all who knew Cochrane. Moreover, he had his own Yankee notions—notions which, when once they get fixed in a Yankee noddle, are not to be eradicated. These notions tended to prevent, in every manner and at any price, the fall of Callao. Odd as the calculation may seem, it was the very decided one, not only of my captain, but of all his countrymen in a like predicament. They appeared more anxious about the fate of the fortress than about the confiscation of their cargoes. This sympathy of American republicans with the duration of despotic power is easily explained, by calling to mind that, with the fall of Callao—Spain's last stronghold in South America—the war on that continent would be as good as ended, and that our commerce would lose, by the consequent pacification, not only one of its most profitable, but one of its most interesting branches. I say one of its most *inte-*

resting, because, assuredly, in the majority of cases, it was less the prospect of gain—although this is never indifferent to an American—than the fascination of the innumerable dangers and adventures inseparable from that traffic, which made it so dear to our citizens and seamen. Of this gainful and adventurous commerce we had enjoyed a complete monopoly—first, because we were nearest, and, secondly, because we produced exactly the articles which patriots as well as Spaniards most needed. As was to be expected of prudent people, we had worked this monopoly in a way which made a prolongation of the interesting *status quo* appear extremely desirable. We had carried flour and meal for the Spaniards, when the Spaniards were at the hungriest, and when the carriage was attended with the greatest risk and with proportionate gain; and we had rendered similar services to the patriots, just at the very moment when these had nothing left to gnaw at. During the blockade, it was of course the Spaniards who stood in greatest need of supplies, and it seemed all the juster to take them these, that they paid very well for them.

It was whilst tacking to and fro at a distance of four or five miles from the entrance of the harbour—watching, in reality, an opportunity to slip in—that the brig “Perseverance,” Captain Ready, of which I had the honour to be supercargo, was hailed and brought to by a patriot cruiser. What ensued showed us pretty plainly that we should

have difficulty in getting out of this scrape. Our personal effects we were allowed to retain, but we ourselves were forthwith sent ashore and taken to Lima. There we had remained ever since, hearing no word either of brig or cargo. In the latter I was greatly interested, inasmuch as my whole capital—the savings of ten years' hard deskwork—was therein embarked. The captain was also interested to the extent of one-fifth, and he was half owner of the brig.

For a young man, on his first spec, undertaken with the modest earnings of a long servitude, it was not very encouraging to find his hopes of fortune thus unexpectedly run aground. My bark was evidently upon a sandbank, with little hopes of getting afloat again, and with plenty of sharks hovering around, greedy for the spoil. The sharks were here represented by the patriots, who to my eyes were more odious than any sharks that ever swam. I hated them so heartily that I could with pleasure have seen them all hanged.

Very different was the temper of my worthy captain. He displayed infinite philosophy; passed his days with a penknife and stick in his hand, whittling away, Yankee fashion; and, when he had chopped up his stick, he would set to work notching and hacking chair, bench, or table. When spoken to about the brig, he ground his teeth a little, but said nothing, and whittled harder than before. This was consistent with his character;

he had always passed for anything but talkative. Weeks had often elapsed, during our long sea-voyage, without his uttering a word except to give the needful orders. So confirmed was his taciturnity, so little inviting his manner, that few cared to importune him with their conversation. His vinegar physiognomy, compressed lips and dark gloomy eyes—which seemed to swim in a dull cloud like those of a drunken man—were anything but prepossessing, and people thought twice before accosting him. His redeeming point was his voice. When he *did* speak, it was music. Even on board ship, when shouting his orders through the storm, its tones were mellow and harmonious, as though it would have lulled and appeased the hurricane. There was an indescribable charm in that man's voice. When he spoke, his dark dry countenance assumed a gentle and benevolent expression, and this was particularly observable when he did anybody a good office. His features, on such occasions, beamed with kindness, and one felt irresistibly led to like him. Hence, in spite of his peculiarities, he was generally beloved by his brother captains, and by all who knew him. When he spoke, his words, the more prized by reason of their rarity, were always listened to with attention. Rough as sea-faring men generally are, I remember not to have ever heard a rough word addressed to him, and often his mere entrance sufficed to still disputes.

During the whole time he had sailed for the Baltimore house, in whose service I was, he had shown himself a model of trustworthiness and seamanship, and enjoyed the full confidence of his employers. It was said, however, that his early life had not been irreproachable; that when he first, and as a very young man, had command of a Philadelphian ship, something had occurred which had thrown a stain upon his character. What this was, I had never heard very distinctly stated. He himself was far too proud and reserved to give an explanation. It was said that he had favoured the escape of a malefactor, and ensnared some officers who were sent on board his vessel to seize him. All this was very vague; but what was positive was the fact, that the owners and consignees of the ship he then commanded had had much trouble about the matter, and Ready himself remained long unemployed, until the rapid increase of trade between the United States and the infant republics of South America—attributable to the revival of the war, in consequence of Bolivar's indefatigable exertions—caused seamen of ability to be in much request, and he was offered the command of a vessel by our house, although not without much hesitation. They had no cause to repent it. On the contrary, the captain's skill, daring, and activity had been the chief cause of their acknowledged pre-eminence amongst the Baltimore houses in the South American trade. When his former

employers knew this, they made him very favourable offers to re-enter their service, but he abruptly rejected them. And it was observed that, when their names were mentioned before him, a bitter smile played round his mouth, succeeded by so sullen a gloom that none ventured to question him on the subject.

It was afternoon, and we were seated, as before mentioned, outside the French coffeehouse at Lima. The party consisted of seven or eight captains of merchant vessels that had been seized, and they were doing their best to kill the time, some smoking, others chewing, but nearly all with penknife and stick in hand, whittling as for a wager. On their first arrival at Lima, and adoption of this coffeehouse as a place of resort, the tables and chairs belonging to it seemed in a fair way to be cut to pieces by these indefatigable whittlers; but the coffeehouse-keeper had hit upon a plan to avoid such deterioration of his chattels, and had placed in every corner of the rooms bundles of sticks, at which his Yankee customers cut and notched, till the coffeehouse assumed the appearance of a carpenter's shop.

The costume and airs of the patriots, as they called themselves, were no small source of amusement to us. They strutted about in all the pride of their fire-new freedom, regular caricatures of soldiers. One would have on a Spanish jacket, part of the spoils of Ayacucho; another, an

American one, purchased from some sailor; a third, a monk's robe, cut short, and fashioned into a sort of doublet. Here was a shako wanting a peak, in company with a gold-laced velvet coat of the time of Philip V.; there, a hussar jacket and an old-fashioned cocked hat. The volunteers were the best clothed, also in great part from the plunder of the battle of Ayacucho. Their uniforms were laden with gold and silver lace; and some of the officers, not satisfied with two epaulettes, had half-a-dozen dangling from their shoulders.

As we sat smoking, whittling, and quizzing the patriots, a side-door of the coffeehouse was suddenly opened, and an officer came out, whose appearance was calculated to give us a far more favourable opinion of the military men of South America. He was about thirty years of age, plainly but tastefully dressed, and of that unassuming, engaging demeanour which is so often found the companion of the greatest decision of character, and which contrasted with the martial deportment of a young man who followed him, and who, although in much more showy uniform, was evidently his inferior in rank. We bowed as he passed before us, and he acknowledged the salutation by raising his cocked hat slightly, but courteously, from his head. He was passing on, when his eyes suddenly fell upon Captain Ready, who was standing a little on one side, notching away at his tenth or twelfth

stick, and who at that moment happened to look up. The officer started, gazed earnestly at Ready for the space of a second or two, and then, with delight expressed on his countenance, sprang forward and clasped him in his arms.

"Captain Ready!"

"That is my name," quietly replied the captain.

"Is it possible you do not know me?" exclaimed the officer.

Ready looked hard at him, and seemed a little in doubt. At last he shook his head.

"You do not know me?" repeated the other, almost reproachfully, and then whispered something in his ear.

It was now Ready's turn to start and look surprised. One of his sunny smiles, a smile of friendly and well-pleased recognition, lit up his countenance as he grasped the hand of the officer, who took his arm and dragged him away into the house.

A quarter of an hour elapsed, during which we lost ourselves in conjectures as to who this acquaintance of Ready's could be. At the end of that time the captain and his new (or old) friend reappeared. The latter walked away, and we saw him enter the government house, whilst Ready joined us, silent and phlegmatic as ever, and resumed his stick and penknife. In reply to our inquiries as to who the officer was, he only said that he belonged to the army besieging Callao, and that he had once made

a voyage as his passenger. This was all the information we could extract from our taciturn friend ; but we saw plainly that the officer was somebody of importance, from the respect paid him by the soldiers and others whom he met.

The morning following this incident we were seated at our chocolate, when an orderly dragoon came to ask for Captain Ready. The captain went out to speak to him, and presently returning, went on with his breakfast very deliberately.

When he had done, he asked me if I were inclined for a little excursion out of the town, which would, perhaps, keep us a couple of days away. I willingly accepted, heartily sick as I was of the monotonous life we were leading. We packed up our valises, took our pistols and cutlasses, and went out.

To my astonishment the orderly was waiting at the door with two magnificent Spanish chargers, splendidly accoutred. They were the finest horses I had seen in Peru, and my curiosity was strongly excited to know who had sent them, and whither we were going. To my questions, Ready replied that we were going to visit the officer whom he had spoken to on the preceding day, and who was with the besieging army, and had once been his passenger ; but he declared he did not know his name or rank.

We had left the town about a mile behind us, when we heard the sound of cannon ; it became

louder as we went on, and about a mile farther we met a string of carts, full of wounded, going in to Lima. Here and there we caught sight of parties of marauders, who disappeared as soon as they saw our orderly. I felt a great longing and curiosity to witness the fight that was evidently going on—not, however, that I was particularly desirous of taking share in it, or putting myself in the way of the bullets. My friend the captain jogged on by my side, taking little heed of the roar of the cannon, which to him was no novelty; for having passed his life at sea, he had had more than one encounter with pirates and other rough customers, and had been many times under the fire of batteries, running in and out of blockaded American ports. His whole attention was now engrossed by the management of his horse, which was somewhat restive, and he, like most sailors, was a very indifferent rider.

On reaching the top of a small rising ground, we beheld to the left the dark frowning bastions of the fort, and to the right the village of Bella Vista, which, although commanded by the guns of Callao, had been chosen as the headquarters of the besieging army—the houses being for the most part built of huge blocks of stone, and offering sufficient resistance to the balls. The orderly pointed out to us the various batteries, and especially one just completed, which was situated about three hundred yards from the fortress.

It had not yet been used, and was still masked from the enemy by some houses in its front.

Whilst we were looking about us, Ready's horse, irritated by the noise of the firing, the flashes of the guns, and perhaps more than anything by the captain's bad riding, became more and more unmanageable, and at last, taking the bit between his teeth, started off at a mad gallop, closely followed by myself and the orderly, to whose horses the panic seemed to have communicated itself. The clouds of dust raised by the animals' feet prevented us from seeing whither we were going. Suddenly there was an explosion that seemed to shake the very earth under us, and Ready, the orderly, and myself, lay sprawling with our horses on the ground. Before we could collect our senses and get up, we were nearly deafened by a tremendous roar of artillery close to us, and at the same moment a shower of stones and fragments of brick and mortar clattered about our ears.

The orderly was stunned by his fall; I was bruised and bewildered. Ready was the only one who seemed in no way put out. Extricating himself, with his usual phlegm, from under his horse, he came to our assistance. I was soon on my legs, and endeavouring to discover the cause of all this uproar.

Our unruly steeds had brought us close to the new battery, at the very moment that the train of a mine under the houses in front of it had been

fired. The instant the obstacle was removed, the artillerymen had opened a tremendous fire on the fort. The Spaniards were not slow to return the compliment, and fortunate it was that a solid fragment of wall intervened between us and their fire, or all our troubles about the brig, and everything else, would have been at an end. Already upwards of twenty balls had struck the old broken wall. Shot and shell were flying in every direction, the smoke was stifling, the uproar indescribable. It was so dark with the smoke and dust from the fallen houses, that we could not see an arm's length before us. The captain asked two or three soldiers who were hurrying by, where the battery was; but they were in too great haste to answer, and it was only when the smoke cleared away a little that we discovered we were not twenty paces from it. Ready seized my arm, and pulling me with him, I the next moment found myself standing beside a gun, under cover of the breast-works.

The battery consisted of thirty guns, twenty-four and thirty-six pounders, served with a zeal and courage which far exceeded anything I had expected to find in the patriot army. The fellows were really more than brave, they were foolhardy. They danced rather than walked round the guns, and exhibited a contempt of death that could not well be surpassed. As to drawing the guns back from the embrasures whilst loading them, they

never dreamed of such a thing. They stood jeering and scoffing the Spaniards, and bidding them take better aim.

It must be remembered that this was only three months after the battle of Ayacucho, the greatest feat of arms which the South American patriots had achieved during the whole of their protracted struggle with Spain. That victory had literally electrified the troops, and inspired them with a contempt of their enemy, which frequently showed itself, as on this occasion, in acts of the greatest daring and temerity.

At the gun by which Ready and myself took our stand, half the artillerymen were already killed, and we had scarcely come there, when a cannon-shot took the head off a man standing close to me. The wind of the ball was so great that I believe it would have suffocated me, had I not fortunately been standing sideways in the battery. At the same moment, something hot splashed over my neck and face, and nearly blinded me. I looked, and saw the man lying without his head before me. I cannot describe the sickening sensation that came over me. It was not the first man I had seen killed in my life, but it was the first whose blood and brains had spurted into my face. My knees shook and my head swam; I was obliged to lean against the wall, or I should have fallen.

Another ball fell close beside me, and, strange to say, it brought me partly to myself again; and

by the time a third and fourth had bounced into the battery, I began to take things pretty coolly —my heart beating rather quicker than usual, I acknowledge; but, nevertheless, I found an indescribable sort of pleasure, a mischievous joy, if I may so call it, in the peril and excitement of the scene.

Whilst I was getting over my terrors, my companion moved about the battery with his usual *sang-froid*, reconnoitring the enemy. He ran no useless risk, kept himself well behind the breastworks, stooping down when necessary, and taking all proper care of himself. When he had completed his reconnoissance, he, to my no small astonishment, took off his coat and neck-handkerchief, the latter of which he tied tight round his waist, then, taking a rammer from the hand of a soldier who had just fallen, he ordered or rather signed to the artillerymen to draw the gun back.

There was something so cool and decided in his manner, that they obeyed, without testifying any surprise at his interference, and as though he had been one of their own officers. He loaded the piece, had it drawn forward again, pointed and fired it. He then went to the next gun and did the same thing there. He seemed so perfectly at home in the battery, that nobody ever dreamed of disputing his authority, and the two guns were entirely under his direction. I had now got used to the thing myself, so I went forward and offered

my services, which, in the scarcity of men, (so many having been killed,) were not to be refused, and I helped to draw the guns backwards and forwards, and to load them. The captain kept running from one to the other, pointing them, and admirably well too; for every shot took effect within a circumference of a few feet on the bastion in front of us.

This lasted nearly an hour, at the end of which time the fire was considerably slackened, for the greater part of our guns had become unserviceable. Only about a dozen kept up the fire, (the ball, I was going to say,) and amongst them were the two that Ready commanded. He had given them time to cool after firing, whereas most of the others, in their desperate haste and eagerness, had neglected that precaution. Although the patriots had now been fifteen years at war with the Spaniards, they were still very indifferent artillerymen—for artillery had little to do in most of their fights, which were generally decided by cavalry and infantry; and even in that of Ayacucho there were only a few small field-pieces in use on either side. The mountainous nature of the country, intersected, too, by mighty rivers, and the want of good roads, were the reasons of the insignificant part played by the artillery in those wars.

Whilst we were thus hard at work, who should enter the battery but the very officer we had left Lima to visit? He was attended by a numerous

staff, and was evidently of very high rank. He stood a little back, watching all Captain Ready's movements, and rubbing his hands with visible satisfaction. Just at that moment the captain fired one of the guns, and, as the smoke cleared away a little, we saw the opposite bastion rock, and then sink down into the moat. A joyous hurra greeted its fall, and the general and his staff sprang forward.

One must have witnessed the scene that followed in order to form any adequate idea of the mad joy and enthusiasm of its actors. The general seized Ready in his arms, and eagerly embraced him, then almost threw him to one of his officers, who performed the like ceremony, and, in his turn, passed him to a third. The imperturbable captain flew, or was tossed, like a ball, from one to the other. I also came in for my share of the embraces.

I thought them all stark-staring mad; and, indeed, I do not believe they were far from it. The balls were still hailing into the battery; one of them cut a poor devil of an orderly nearly in two, but no notice was taken of such trifles. It was a curious scene enough; the cannon-balls bouncing about our ears—the ground under our feet slippery with blood—wounded and dying on all sides—and we ourselves pushed and passed about from the arms of one black-bearded fellow into those of another. There was something

thoroughly exotic, completely South American and tropical, in this impromptu.

Strange to say, now that the breach was made, and a breach such that a determined regiment, assisted by a well-directed fire of artillery, could have had no difficulty in storming the town, there was no appearance of a disposition to profit by it. The patriots were quite contented with what had been done; most of the officers left the batteries, and the thing was evidently over for the day. I knew little of Spanish Americans then, or I should have felt less surprised than I did at their not following up their advantage. It was not from want of courage, for it was impossible to have exhibited more than they had done that morning; but they had had their moment of fury, of wild energy and exertion, and the other side of the national character—indolence—now showed itself. After fighting like devils, they now, at the very moment when activity was of most importance, lay down and took the *siesta*.

We were about leaving the battery, with the intention of visiting some of the others, when our orderly came up in all haste, with orders to conduct us to the general's quarters. We followed him, and soon reached a noble villa, at the door of which a guard was stationed. Here we were given over to a sort of major-domo, who led us through a crowd of aides-de-camp, staff-officers, and orderlies, to a chamber, whither our valises

had preceded us. We were desired to make haste with our toilet, as dinner would be served so soon as his Excellency returned from the batteries; and, indeed, we had scarcely changed our dress, and washed the blood and smoke from our persons, when the major-domo reappeared, and announced the general's return.

Dinner was laid out in a large saloon, in which some sixty officers were assembled when we entered it. With small regard to etiquette, and not waiting for the general to welcome us, they all sprang to meet us with a "*Bien venidos, capitanes!*"

The dinner was such as might be expected at the table of a general who commanded at the same time an army and the blockade of a much-frequented port. The most delicious French and Spanish wines were there in profusion; the conviviality of the guests was unbounded; but although they drank their champagne out of tumblers, no one showed the smallest symptom of inebriety.

The first toast given, was—Bolivar.

The second—Sucre.

The third—The Battle of Ayacucho.

The fourth—Union between Columbia and Peru.

The fifth—Hualero.

The general rose to return thanks, and we now, for the first time, knew his name. He raised his glass, and spoke, evidently with much emotion.

"Señores ! Amigos !" said he, "that I am this day amongst you, and able to thank you for your kindly sentiments towards your general and brother in arms, is owing, under Providence, to the good and brave stranger whose acquaintance you have only this day made, but who is one of my oldest and best friends." And so saying he left his place, and, approaching Captain Ready, affectionately embraced him. The seaman's iron features lost their usual imperturbability, and his lips quivered as he stammered out the two words—

"Amigo siempre."

The following day we passed in the camp, and upon the next returned to Lima, the general insisting on our taking up our quarters in his house.

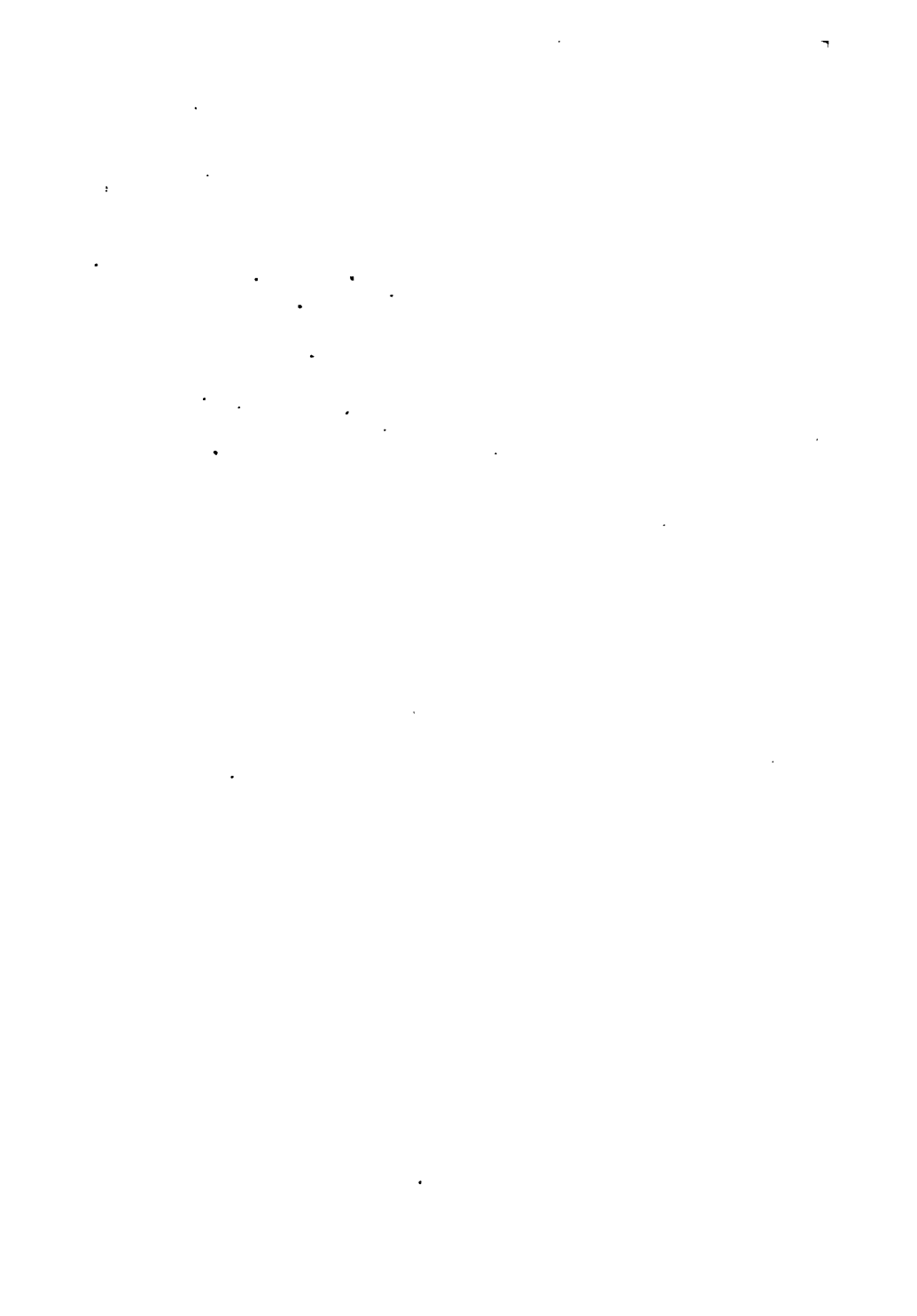
From Hualero and his lady I learned the origin of the friendship existing between the distinguished Columbian general and my taciturn Yankee captain. It was the honourable explanation of the mysterious stain upon Ready's character.

Our difficulties regarding the brig were now soon at an end. The vessel and cargo were returned to us, with the exception of a large quantity of cigars belonging to the Spanish government. These were, of course, confiscated, but the general bought them, and made them a present to Captain Ready, who sold them by auction ;

and cigars being in no small demand amongst that tobacco-loving population, they fetched immense prices, and put thirty thousand dollars into my friend's pocket.

To be brief, in three weeks we sailed from Lima, and in a vastly better humour than when we arrived there.

THE END.





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